

# **CLASS NOTES - EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER**

**Taught By Robert Stapleton**



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## **EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER CLASS INSTRUCTIONS**

### **Robert Stapleton**

#### **CLASS DESCRIPTION:**

1. This class seeks to study the restoration of Israel and their preservation under Persian rule.
  - A. In order to do so we will study background information on the times, circumstances and need for these books.
2. Emphasis will be placed on the word of the prophets and the providence of God.
  - A. We will seek to understand how God's providence was at work in Old Testament times.

#### **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Each student is to read the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther at least two times during the quarter and keep a log.
  - A. Instructions concerning log.
    1. Keep a typewritten log of your reading, with dates and chapters read.
      - A. Your log should be turned in to instructor no later than the beginning of class day during the finals week – late papers count one grade per day off.
2. Tests:
  - A. Two scheduled tests will be administered.
    1. Each will account for **30%** of your total score.
    2. Any additional credit will be at the instructor's discretion.
3. Memory Verses:
  - A. The following verses are to be committed to memory:

Ezra 7:10  
Nehemiah 4:6  
Nehemiah 8:8  
Esther 4:14
  - B. Memory work should be done in the **ASV, ESV, KJV, or NKJV** unless the instructor grants permission to use another version.
4. Each student is to write a term paper on Mordecai, Esther, and Haman (three term papers in total) and should be turned at the same time as the reading log.
  - A. Each term paper should be between three and five double-spaced typed pages.
  - B. Watch for misspelled words and check your grammar, as I will.
  - C. Term papers will count for **20%** of your total grade.
  - D. Your term paper should be turned in to instructor no later than the beginning of class day during the finals week – late papers count one grade per day off.
5. Each student is to prepare one twenty minute sermon based upon one of the main characters found within these books.
  - A. Sermon will be preached at some point during the quarter and will count for **20%** of your total grade.
6. Recommended reading:
  - A. An Introduction To The Old Testament Prophets, Hobart E. Freeman.

- B. My Servants The Prophets, Edward J. Young.
- C. The Biblical Prophets In Outlined Notes, Leon D. Stancliff.
- D. Old Testament History, William Smith.
- E. Old Testament Survey, William Sanford.
- F. A Survey of Israel's History, Leon J. Wood.
- G. The Heart of Hebrew History, H.I. Hester.
- H. Archaeology and Bible History, Joseph P. Free.
- I. Sacred History and Geography, Don DeWelt.
- J. Kingdom of Priests, A History of Old Testament Israel, Eugene H. Merrill.
- K. The Providence of God, Garland Elkins, Thomas B. Warren, editors.
- L. The Temple, Its Ministry And Services, Alfred Edersheim.

## **EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER INTRODUCTION NOTES**

### **THE PROPHETS:**

1. Although Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther fall within the historical section of the O.T., it is good to consider the prophets, in connection with them, as they were written concerning events prophesied about by the prophets.
2. What Kind Of Men Were These Prophets?
  - A. They were all human.
    1. Men of high character.
    2. Preachers.
  - B. They were uncompromising individuals - Amos 7; Micah 3:8.
  - C. They were conscious of a Divine Call.
  - D. Usually men of certain ruggedness of body and character that commanded attention in any gathering - often lonely.
  - E. They were conscious of God's authority and backing in all emergencies.
  - F. They were men of prayer and communion with God.
  - G. They were clean and consecrated in life and character.
  - H. They were conscious of the privilege of access to the inner counsel of Jehovah.
  - I. They were outspoken critics of specific evils in the social order.
  - J. They were God's agents in revealing the future.
2. What Was Their Mission?
  - A. They were to be spokesman for God – Ex. 4:16; 7:1; Jere. 1:2, 3; Ezek. 3:4-7.
    1. For judgment - Amos 3:2; Hos.4:6; 13:9.
    2. For salvation (hope) - Amos 9:11-14; Hos. 2:23; Micah 4:1, 2.
3. Basic Principles For Understanding The Prophets.
  - A. The Prophet was a man who was moved by the Holy Spirit - 2 Pet. 1:20, 21.
  - B. The Prophet cannot introduce strange things as his function was to call man back to the Law - Deut. 13:1-5.
    1. The books under consideration specifically deal with the matter of restoration, which involved men returning to God and the Law.
  - C. The true prophet is the man whose oracles come to pass - Deut. 18:20-22.

- D. Sometimes prophecy is conditional - Jere. 18:5-11 - Jonah and Nineveh.
  - 1. A threat may be delayed by repentance - 1 Kings 21:29.
- E. The prophets lived before and immediately after the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles.
  - 1. Threats fulfilled in exiles - Zech. 1:5, 6.
  - 2. Promises of return fulfilled in return from Babylon.
- F. Christ's first coming and the beginning of the church are important subjects of Old Testament prophecy - Rom. 1:2; Acts 3:24-26; 1 Pet. 1:10-12.
  - 1. Christ - The Ideal King - Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5; Jere. 33:6.
  - 2. The Suffering Servant - Isa. 53.
  - 3. Church - Kingdom, God's House, God's Mountain, Temple, Sheepfold, etc.
- G. God's Final Revelation Is Made In His Son - Heb. 1:1, 2.  
(Adapted from Minor Prophets, Sunset School of Preaching, Richard Rogers)

## **2. VALUE OF PROPHETIC LITERATURE:**

- A. Gives a more complete picture of the history of the ancient world and particularly the Hebrew world.
- B. Gives a better understanding of the social, cultural and economic conditions of the ancient oriental world with special attention to the Hebrews.
- C. Gives a better understanding and appreciation of the laws and rituals of the Hebrews.
- D. Gives some of the greatest moral and ethical teachings the world has ever known.
- E. Gives some of the greatest religious and doctrinal conceptions known to man covering such things as the doctrine of man, God, sin, and salvation.
- F. Gives some of the finest specimens of literature the world has ever produced.
- G. Gives expression to some of the loftiest conceptions, the deepest emotions, and most beautiful sentiments known to man.
- H. Gives a background for a better understanding of parts of the New Testament.

## **3. PURPOSES OF PROPHETIC LITERATURE:**

- A. Calls God's people back to the religious, moral, and spiritual condition from which they had fallen.
  - 1. Restoration is under consideration here.
- B. Leads God's people on to a higher moral and spiritual level.
- C. Warns God's people of approaching calamity or punishment.
- D. Encourages and strengthens by giving promises of a better day to come as they look forward to the coming of the Messiah.
- E. Preserves records of the activity and ideals of the Hebrews.
- F. Directs the nation of Israel (or other nations) through sermons, personal advice, and divine revelations.

## **4. THE WORK OF THE PROPHETS:**

- A. They served as religious and moral teachers.
- B. They functioned as advisers of rulers.
- C. They worked to promote the doctrine of Israel.
- D. They served as reformers of their age.

## **5. THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF PROPHETS AND PROPHECY:**

- A. Prophecy is not limited to, nor primarily concerned with, the foretelling of future events.
  - 1. The message could refer to the past, present, or future.
- B. Prophecy is not limited to the prophet's lifetime.
  - 1. Prophets spoke primarily to those of his own time, and about the things of his own lifetime, but they could and did predict the future through divine revelation.
- C. Prophecy consisted of any message of instruction given by God to man through a representative of God.
  - 1. The representative who spoke this message was a prophet.
  - 2. The true prophet was a speaker or spokesman for God and served as the representative who brought God's message to man.
- D. Prophecy must be preceded by revelation, vision, or a message from God.
  - 1. Before a prophet could speak the will of God, he had to "see, perceive or receive" a message from God.

## **6. PRINCIPLES OF RESTORATION:**

- A. To restore means to return to a former state or condition.
  - 1. As an example of that, if one restored an automobile or house then it is brought back to its original condition.
- B. Biblically speaking, the object is always to bring people back to the law of God regardless of which covenant one lives under.
  - 1. In order to do this several things must be considered:
    - A. There must be a divine standard.
      - 1. There was for Cain and Abel – Gen. 4:4, 5; Heb. 11:4.
      - 2. There was for Noah – Gen. 6:22.
      - 3. There was the Law of Moses – Deut. 30:11-20; Isa. 66:1-4.
      - 4. Now there is the Gospel of Christ – Heb. 10:8, 9; Jas. 1:25.
    - B. When departed from, God is displeased.
      - 1. From the Law of Moses – Deut. 28:1, 2, 15; 29:24-28; 31:29.
      - 2. From the gospel - 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:1-4.
    - C. God desires restoration.
      - 1. For Israel – Ezek. 36:22-25; Neh. 1:8, 9.
      - 2. For the church – Eph. 2:4, 5, 15, 16, 19-22; 3:3, 15-19.
      - 3. For the individual – Lk. 15:11-32; Acts 8:18-23.
      - 4. Examples:
        - A. Hezekiah - 2 Chron. 29 and 30 (especially 30:9b, 27).
        - B. Josiah - 2 Chron. 34:26-28.
        - C. Simon - Acts 8:24.
- D. Present apostasy foretold - 2 Thess. 2:1-12.
  - 1. To precede the day of Christ's return – vrs. 1-3.
  - 2. To happen to the church - v. 4.
  - 3. To continue until Jesus returns - v. 8.
  - 4. Do not be deceived - vrs. 9, 10.
    - A. Deut. 13:1-4; Mt. 24:24; Isa. 8:19, 20; 2 Cor. 11:13-15.

C. In conclusion on this point we see that restoration is:

1. Valid
2. Needed
3. Possible
4. Approved by the Lord!

## **7. CANONICITY OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH:**

A. Placement:

1. They are connected with the Hebrew title “hymjn-arzu,” which contributes to the normal placing of the two books together.
  - A. “Arzu” is more than likely the Aramaic form of the Hebrew “rzu,” meaning “to help.”
  - B. The word “hymjn” means “Yahweh comforts.”
    1. Yahweh - Jehovah.
2. In the Hebrew placement these books are located just before Chronicles and after Daniel.
  - A. There seems to be reason to believe that the Hebrew Scriptures were originally canonized into a two-fold division – the Law and the Prophets.
    1. However, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. a three-fold division arose – The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings.
  - B. It, also, appears that in the Hebrew canon Ezra and Nehemiah composed one book.
    1. They were also considered to be one book by the Babylonian Talmud, Josephus, and Melito of Sardis.
      - A. Babylonian Talmud – combination of the Mishna plus the Babylonian Gemara.
        1. Mishna – basically the entire body of Jewish religious law that was passed down.
          - A. Collection of Oral Law—legal interpretations of portions of the biblical books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy and other legal material.
        2. Gemara - The term Gemara means addition, therefore the gemara is an addition to the Mishna.
          - A. There are two gemaras, each developed by many rabbis over a few centuries.
            1. One was developed in Israel, and is called the Yerushalmi.
            2. The other was developed in Babylonia, and is called the Bavli (i.e. Babylonian Talmud).
          - B. The Gemara (in Aramaic) is a commentary on the Mishna.
        - B. Josephus – Contra Apion 1.8.
        - C. Melito of Sardis – so-called bishop of Sardis, prominent ecclesiastical writer in the latter half of the second century.
  - B. In a Hebrew manuscript dated 1448 the division into two books was introduced and it is still maintained this way in Modern Hebrew Bibles.

3. In the beginning the Septuagint (Septuagint {abbreviated LXX} is the name given to the Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures. The Septuagint has its origin in Alexandria, Egypt and was translated between 300-200 BC) grouped the two books together into one, calling them Esdras B or 2 Esdras.
    - A. By the time of Origen, though, it had divided the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.
      1. Origen - one of the men commonly referred to as the Fathers of the early Church.
        - A. Was born, probably at Alexandria, about 182; and died at Caesarea not later than 251.
  4. The Latin Vulgate divided them into First and Second Ezra due to the duplicate list seen in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7.
    - A. The Latin Vulgate - the Latin Bible translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 A.D.
  5. In Baba Bathra 15a Ezra and Nehemiah were considered as one book.
    - A. This was with the understanding that Ezra began the writing and then Nehemiah finished it.
    - B. The Baba Bathra is one of the divisions or tracts of the Babylonian Talmud dealing with civil and criminal law especially in relation to property ownership.
      1. It is referred to as the Last Gate.
      2. Recorded tradition from the time frame of A.D. 70-200.
- B. Authors:
1. Ezra was written by Ezra.
    - A. He appears to have been the son of Seraiah – Ezra 7:1-6.
      1. Seraiah was the high priest who was slain after taking Jerusalem – 2 Kings 25:18, 21.
    - B. A descendant of Judah though Caleb – 1 Chron. 4:17.
    - C. The head of one of the twenty-two courses of priests that came from exile with Zerubbabel and Jeshua – Neh. 10:2-8; 12:1, 13.
      1. As a priest, he was descended from Zadok and Phinehas – Ezra 7:1-6.
    - D. He was a scribe – Ezra 7:6,11,12,20.
  2. Much of Nehemiah appears to have been written by Nehemiah.
    - A. He was the son of Hachaliah and cupbearer to king Artaxerxes – Neh. 1:1; 2:5; 7:2.
      1. In this position he held a place of honor in the palace of Shushan – Neh. 1:11.
        - A. This appears to have allowed him to have confidential access to the king.
    - B. He was born in exile, but grew up in the faith of Jehovah.
    - C. He is listed as a prince rather than as a priest – Neh. 9:38; 10:1.
      1. As a prince he signed the covenant – Neh. 9:38; 10:1.
    - D. He may have been the chief man who returned with Zerubbabel from Babylon – Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7.



- E. His Persian name was Sheshbazzar – Ezra 1:8.
- F. He became the Governor of Jerusalem – Neh. 10:1.
- G. It is believed that he died of old age.

C. Date:

- 1. Ezra:
  - A. Arrival in Jerusalem probably in 458/457 B.C.
    - 1. Note Ezra 7:1 and 8 where it indicates that he arrived in Jerusalem in the fifth month of the seventh year of the king of Persia.
      - A. There is some question as to whether this was in the reign of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (464-432 B.C) or Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-359 B.C.).
        - 1. I think there is enough evidence to indicate that it was probably during the first period.
          - A. Ezra is identified as Nehemiah's contemporary - Nehemiah 8:2.
    - B. Therefore, it seems that the book would have been written some time following his arrival in Jerusalem.
      - 1. It does not seem that it would have been written after 445/444 when Nehemiah first arrived in Jerusalem, as he would have surely mentioned it.
- 2. Nehemiah:
  - A. His first arrival occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of king Artaxerxes which would be around 445/444 B.C.– Neh. 1:2; 2:1.
    - 1. Thus his arrival was 12 or 13 years after Ezra arrived.
  - B. His second arrival in Jerusalem was probably in 433/432 B.C. – Neh. 13:6,7.
    - 1. He left Jerusalem in the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of Artaxerxes.
    - 2. He may also have returned in the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of Artaxerxes, although this is uncertain.

**8. CANONICITY OF ESTHER:**

A. Author:

- 1. Nothing is known for sure as to who the author is.
  - A. The Babylonian Talmud attributes it to the men of the Synagogue.
  - B. Josephus, Antiquities XI.6.1, attributes it to Mordecai.
  - C. Various Rabbinic writings suggest that Mordecai is the author.
  - D. Others have suggested Nehemiah.
- 2. Whoever the author is, we can know some things about him:
  - A. He was a resident of Persia, which is seen by his knowledge of Persian customs.
  - B. He also seemed to have intimate knowledge of the layout of Shushan and the Royal Palaces.
  - C. It is evident that the author was of Jewish descent.

B. Date:

- 1. Somewhere around 464-416 B.C.

- A. Book appears to have been written following the end of the reign of Ahasuerus – Esth. 1:1; 10:1, 2.
  - 1. Ahasuerus is commonly identified with Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.).
  - 2. Note that there is the reference to the king's biography in chapter 10:1,2, which would suggest that he had already died.
- 2. The LXX and Josephus read Artaxerxes throughout implying identification with Artaxerxes II (404-359 B.C.).
  - A. However, the traditional date is the former one associated with Xerxes I.
- 3. The language of the book is very similar to that of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, therefore suggesting that it was written about the same time as these books.

## **EZRA BACKGROUND NOTES**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

- 1. Captivity:
  - A. Judah came under Babylon's control and the first captives were taken out of the land in 606 B.C. - Dan 1:1-7.
  - B. Two subsequent deportations of captives occurred in 597 and 586 B.C.
  - C. Jeremiah, a contemporary of these events, prophesied the captivity would last 70 years – Jere. 25:12; 29:10.
  - D. Although we have no details of these seventy years, the books Ezra and Nehemiah pick up the history with the events of their return home - Ezra 1:1-4.
- 2. Ezra and Nehemiah filled different roles yet worked compatibly to affect a spiritual renewal in the land.
- 3. This book is named for the person whose career it traces.
- 4. The book traces events from 536 B.C. when Cyrus of Persia instituted procedures for Judah's return from captivity.
- 5. It is likely that during this time the word "Jew" replaced the word "Hebrew" as the common name for designating Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob.
  - A. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) was gone and the surviving nation was composed of the people of Judah primarily.
  - B. The word "Jew" is the result of a linguistic process involving the word "Judah."
  - C. Originally it signified "one from Judah."

### **BACKGROUND:**

- 1. Just as the people had gone into captivity in three stages, so was their return in three stages.
  - A. In 536 B.C. Zerubbabel led the first group home and the temple was rebuilt and dedicated in 515 B.C.
  - B. In 458/457 B.C. Ezra brought home a second group of captives and a great spiritual revival occurred.
  - C. In 445/444 B.C. Nehemiah led the last group of exiles home and rebuilt the wall

- of Jerusalem.
- 2. Traditions:
  - A. Ezra assembled the books of the Old Testament, which were written before his time.
  - B. He helped organize the early Sanhedrin, which governed Israel even as late as Jesus' time.
  - C. He is linked to the establishment of the Pharisees, particularly the group called Scribes.
    - 1. Their duty was to copy and teach the Scripture.

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF EZRA:**

- 1. The book tells of the restoration of the Jews to their homeland.
  - A. Ezra shows God as a keeper of promises to His people.
  - B. It emphasizes the people's responsibility to be holy.
- 2. Ezra was a priest and a scribe - Ezra 7:1-6.
  - A. His book reflects his interest in the restoration of the temple to its central place in the nation's life.
  - B. He also wrote to give account, from the religious or priestly point of view, of the restoration of the nation of Israel to its land.

### **EZRA OUTLINE:**

- 1. Restoration under Zerubbabel..... Chapters 1-6.
  - A. Cyrus' Proclamation Concerning the Temple..... Chapter 1.
  - B. List of Those Who Returned from Babylon..... Chapter 2.
  - C. Rebuilding the Temple Begins..... Chapter 3.
  - D. Adversaries Hinder the Work..... Chapter 4.
  - E. The Work Resumed - Tatnai Writes to Darius..... Chapter 5.
  - F. The Temple Finished and Dedicated..... Chapter 6.
- 2. Reforms under Ezra..... Chapters 7-10.
  - A. Ezra Authorized to Lead a Return..... Chapter 7.
  - B. Ezra's Return..... Chapter 8.
  - C. Ezra Grieves Over the Mixed Marriages..... Chapter 9.
  - D. Mixed Marriages Abandoned..... Chapter 10.

### **COMMENTARY**

#### **EZRA CHAPTER ONE:**

(Subject: Cyrus' proclamation concerning the Temple.)

Verse 1

- 1. ...first year...
  - A. The first year of Cyrus ruling over the Babylonian Empire.
- 2. ...Cyrus...
  - A. The King of Persia.
    - A. He descended the Persian throne in 559 B.C.
    - B. Conquered the Kingdom of the Medes ca. 550 B.C.

- C. Conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.
  - 1. Taking the city on the night of Belshazzar's feast – Dan. 5:30.
- B. His coming was foretold in the Scriptures and his life is spelled out in several additional ones – 2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-8; 3:7; 4:3-5; 5:13-17; 6:3-14; Isa. 44:28, 45; Dan. 1:21; 6:28; 10:1.
- C. Cyrus - "sun."
  - 2. ...Persia...
    - A. Present day Iran.
    - B. Included Persia, Media, Babylonia, Chaldea, and many smaller dependencies.
      - 1. Founded by Cyrus in 539 B.C. as a much larger Empire.
  - 3. ...the word of the Lord...
    - A. Important to see where the message that is coming is coming from.
  - 4. ...the mouth of Jeremiah...
    - A. Reference to Jere. 25:12; 29:10.
  - 5. ...the Lord stirred up...
    - A. See Isa. 44:28; 45:1, 13; 2 Chron. 36:22, 23 where this "stirring up" is viewed as a command.
    - B. This is in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy – Jere. 25:12; 29:10; Dan 9:1, 2.
  - 6. ...proclamation...
    - A. This is commonly referred to as the "Edict of Cyrus."
- Verse 2
  - 1. ...hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth...
    - A. Not exactly.
      - 1. Instead, an Oriental style of hyperbole.
      - 2. Granted, the Persian Empire was the greatest ruling power in the world at that time.
        - A. But it did not encompass all the kingdoms of the world.
  - 2. ...he hath charged me...
    - A. Emphatic here, the Lord God was doing the commanding.
      - 1. The phrase "God of heaven" seems to have been somewhat of a "title" of the Supreme Being of the Persians.
    - B. It is also interesting to note that Cyrus, a Gentile, makes reference to the Lord God using His Israelite name instead of the Persian deity Ormuzd.
      - 1. Another name for Ahura Mazda, the "good god" of Zoroastrianism.
        - A. Zoroastrianism is a dualistic religion founded around 650 B.C. by Zarathustra, which teaches that the universe is basically a battleground between a good god (Ahura Mazda) and a bad god (Shaitan).
    - C. It is also note worthy to see that Cyrus had undoubtedly seen the prophecies which were written about him some two hundred years before his birth - Isa 44:28; 46:1-4.
      - 1. It is possible that Daniel had been the one who showed him these things since he had served as "Prime Minister" to Cyrus.
  - 3. ...to build him an house...
    - A. Reference to the rebuilding of the Temple.

Verse 3

1. ...and let him go up to Jerusalem...
  - A. Full permission was being granted to those Jewish exiles that chose to return to their own country.
    1. Clearly, a call for workers.

Verse 4

1. And whosoever remaineth...
  - A. Reference to those who stayed behind.
    1. They were to support those returning and the rebuilding of the Temple.
  - B. The problem was that most were treated well where they were and did not want to return – Jere. 29:4-7.
2. ...the freewill offering...
  - A. To the poor Israelites things such as cattle, goods, and money were to be given to aid them.
  - B. Besides that, an additional freewill offering was being sent ahead to help with the needs of those who would assist in the rebuilding of the Temple.

Verse 5

1. Then rose up...
  - A. The fathers and the priests of the later captivity, who were from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, rose up to take the lead.
    1. These had maintained a connection to the pure worship of God and sought to have the Temple worship reestablished.

Verse 6

1. And all they that *were* about them...
  - A. Their Assyrian friends and neighbors.

Verse 7

1. ...Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord...
  - A. These would be the vessels previously taken from the original Temple when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it.
2. ...the house of his gods.
  - A. Reference to Merodach, the god of Nebuchadnezzar – Dan. 1:2.

Verse 8

1. ...Mithredath...
  - A. Name meant “given by Mithra” or “dedicated to Mithra.”
    1. Mithra – “a god of the tribes of the Aryans who settled in ancient Persia. Mithra, also known as Mithras, is the same god as Mitra, the sun god who appears in the ancient literature of Hinduism called the Vedas. According to Zoroastrian religious tradition, Mithra was the god of light, closely associated with the sun. Mithra was said to be an ally of the supreme god Ahura Mazda. Under Ahura Mazda’s leadership, Mithra and other gods fought against Angra Mainyu, the Zoroastrian god of evil.” World Book Online.
2. ...Shechbazzar...
  - A. Perhaps Zerubbabel, heir to the throne of Judah – Ezra 5:16; Zech. 4:9; 1 Chron. 3:19.

1. May have been the name given to him by the Babylonians.

Verses 9-11

1. ...charger...
  - A. Not a common word, as in its original is only used in this passage.
    1. Although the words “charger/chargers” are found elsewhere, the original as seen here, is only found here while the word translated the same way in other locations is a different word.
    2. Some have suggested that the word is of Persian origin.
  - B. The ASV uses the word “platters.”
    1. Therefore, possibly basins or bowls are under consideration.
2. ...knives...
  - A. Another rare word and found only here.

## **EZRA CHAPTER TWO:**

(Subject: List of those who returned from Babylon. {When comparing this chapter to Nehemiah chapter seven you quickly see a difference in the names and numbers. Resource books such as commentaries can be considered for further information on this. Several reasons could be given as to why the differences exist: Names are spelled differently, or an individual may have had more than one name. As to the difference in numbers, that can easily be accounted for dependant upon what age was used to begin the count. For example, the Apocryphal Book of 1 Esdras, chapter 5:41, mentioned that the children under twelve years of age were not included.})

Verses 1

1. ...these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity...
  - A. This speaks of the numbers that returned from captivity to Jerusalem and Judaea.
  - B. The “province” is Judaea in contrast to Babylon, which was one of the capitals of the Persian Empire.

Verses 2 - 20

1. ...Zerubbabel...(v. 2)
  - A. He serves as one of the leaders to lead the people back to their homeland.
  - B. Later he works to bring about the restoration of the Temple – Ezra 3:1-9.
  - C. Eventually, he becomes the Persian Governor under Darius.
    1. It is during this time that he, after considerable delay, succeeds in the rebuilding of the Temple – Zech. 4:1-14.
  - D. Some, incorrectly, believed that he was the coming Messiah – Zech. 3:1, 8-10.
2. ...Jeshua... (v. 2)
  - A. A descendant of Aaron and a priest of the sanctuary – 1 Chron. 24:11; Ezra 2:36; Neh. 7:39.
3. ...Nehemiah... (v. 2)
  - A. Here one of the leaders in the returning of the people of Judah to their land.
4. ...Mordecai...
  - A. Seen here and in Nehemiah as another of the leaders in the return of the people.
5. ...men of the people... (v. 2)
  - A. In verses 3-19 they are arranged according to families.

B. The genealogy was of great importance to the returning of the Jews.

1. It allowed them to prove whether they were legally Jews.

Verses 21-35

1. The children of... (v. 22)

A. These were people from certain towns.

Verses 36-58

1. The priests... (v. 36)

A. The numbers of the priests and Levites.

2. The Nethinims... (v. 43)

A. Sacred slaves that had been presented to the Levites to assist them in their service.

B. Individuals set apart for the work of the sanctuary.

C. It is believed by some scholars that the Gibeonites were the Nethinims as they had been given the responsibility of serving as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the sanctuary – Josh. 9:21.

D. Scholars also suggest that they were prisoners of war who had become proselytes.

Verses 59-63

1. ...they could not shew their father's house... (v. 59)

A. Those whose ancestral records had been lost.

2. ...Tirshatha... (v. 63)

A. A Persian title, perhaps similar to governor as per the ASV.

B. See also – Neh. 7:65-70; 8:9; 10:1.

3. ...not eat of the most holy things... (v. 63)

A. Reference to the priest's portion of the offerings.

4. ...with Urim and with Thummim. (v. 63)

A. The Urim and Thummim were used when decisions were to be made – Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6.

B. Thus they were being instructed to wait until a priest could set forth the final decision based upon what was revealed through the Urim and Thummim.

Verses 64-67

1. The whole congregation... (v. 64)

A. The total here is 42,360, which is exactly what Nehemiah (Neh. 7:66), and 1 Esdras 5:41 states.

A. See Additional Notes on Esdras – pages 65-68.

Verses 68-70

1. And *some* of the chief of the fathers... (v. 68)

A. Literally, the heads of the families.

1. There appears to be in the area of one hundred such individuals.

2. ...gave after their ability... (v. 69)

A. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

1. Note 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:6, 7.

3. ...drams... (v. 69)

A. Commonly accepted to be the Persian daric.

B. If the same as a half shekel it would have been worth around 33 cents.

### **EZRA CHAPTER THREE:**

(Subject: Rebuilding of the Temple Begins,)

Verse 1

1. ...the seventh month...
  - A. Hebrew month Tishri.
    1. Equivalent to our September/October.
    2. Some such months may carry over from one of our months into the following one.
  - B. The most sacred month of the Jewish year – Ex. 23:16; Lev. 23:24-41.
  - C. See Additional Notes On Months of the Jewish Year – page 63.

Verse 2

1. ...Jeshua...
  - A. The grandson of Seraiah, the high priest, whom Nebuchadnezzar, at Riblah, put to death – 2 Kings 25:18-21.
    1. Josedech, his father, had been carried captive to Babylon, and died there, some time before this.
  - B. Undoubtedly Jeshua was now the high priest – Hag. 1:1, 14; Zech. 3:1, 8; 6:11.
2. ...and builded the altar...
  - A. The building of the altar was of urgent and immediate necessity.
    1. To make atonement for their sins.
    2. To obtain the divine blessing on their preparations for the temple.
    3. As well as animate their feelings of piety and patriotism for the carrying out of that national work.
3. ...written in the law of Moses...
  - A. Reference to the Torah.
  - B. They had previously gone into captivity for rejecting the Law.
    1. Now, it appears they are to take great care to see that they were doing all that it commanded.
4. ...the man of God.
  - A. Literally, “the Prophet.”

Verse 3

1. ...set the altar upon his bases...
  - A. The original site and base.
    1. Note that this was done prior to the laying of the foundation of the Temple.
  - B. In placing it where they did it clearly indicated that the religion that they brought back was identical with that which they had before being taken into captivity.
    1. Of course this had reverence to the Law and not the application of it.
2. ...fear *was* upon them because of the people of those countries...
  - A. Although they were fearful of the people around them they still set up the altar.
    1. Those who were around them were the idolatrous nations such as the Babylonians, Elamites, Hamathites, and so on.
3. ...burnt offerings morning and evening.
  - A. As per the law – Ex. 29:38, 39; Num. 28:3, 4.



Verse 4

1. ...feast of the tabernacles...
  - A. See Additional Notes on Jewish Feasts – page 64.
  - B. The feast of tabernacles was offered as a means of thanksgiving for the harvest recently stored.
    1. At times referred to as the “Feast of Ingathering” – Ex. 34:22.
    2. Also referred to as the “Feast of Harvest” – Ex. 32:16.
  - C. It was the third of the great annual festivals of which every male in Israel was to appear.

Verse 5

1. ...the continual burnt offering...
  - A. They were making sure that they were keeping the Law in every point.
    1. This offering was the morning and evening sacrifice referred to as the “continual burnt offering” – Ex. 19:42; Num. 28:3-6.
2. ...and of everyone that willingly offered a freewill offering...
  - A. They were not about to miss a beat.
    1. This indicates a return to the sacrificing on the altar every time freewill offerings were made by individuals – Leviticus chapters 1, 2, 3.

Verse 6

1. ...But the foundation of the temple...
  - A. It was going to take some time to gather the supplies needed to build the Temple, in addition to the time necessary to construct it.
    1. Worship needed to go on.

Verse 7

1. ...unto them of Zidon...
  - A. An ancient and wealthy city on the Mediterranean some twenty-five miles north of Tyre.
    1. The Zidonians were skilled in the art of metalwork in silver and bronze and textile fabrics, which were dyed with purple.
  - B. Solomon had likewise used their services – 1 Kings 5:11; 2 Chron. 2:15, 16.

Verse 8

1. ...in the second year...
  - A. The second year of Cyrus in Babylon, which was also their second year after their return to Jerusalem.
2. ...second month...
  - A. I.e. Iyar, which corresponds with our April/May.
  - B. The same month that Solomon laid the foundation of the first Temple – 1 Kings 6:1.
3. appointed the Levites...
  - A. They were given the responsibility of overseeing the workmen who were employed to do the construction.

Verse 9

1. ...Kadmiel...
  - A. Jeshua is the head of the Levitical family mentioned in chapter two while

Kadmiel is the head of another Levitical family.

2. ...the sons of Henadad...

A. Possibly a third Levitical family although some commentators question that.

Verse 10

1. ...they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets...

A. A religious ceremony starts the work of the Temple.

2. ...Asaph...

A. A Levite whose descendants lived in Jerusalem after the exile.

B. Mentioned in Nehemiah 2:8.

3. ...after the ordinance of David...

A. This "ordinance" is first briefly seen in 1 Chron. 15:16.

1. Then more fully in verses 17-21.

B. Some commentators have suggested that the musical skills of the Levites had declined while they were in captivity.

Verse 11

1. And they sang together by course...

A. An antiphonal activity.

1. This was a singing, which resulted in their "replying" to each other.

2. Antiphonal or responsive singing.

Verse 12

1. ...wept with a loud voice...

A. This new "house," in comparison to the old one was "as nothing" – Hag. 2:3.

1. It appears that the size and the craftsmanship lacked in the construction of the new Temple.

A. Therefore there was much sorrow for those who had seen the size and beauty of the previous one while those who had never seen the old one thought this one was great.

Verse 13

1. ...could not discern the noise...

A. One was as loud as the other.

## **EZRA CHAPTER FOUR:**

(Subject: Adversaries Hinder the Work.)

Verse 1

1. ...adversaries...

A. Strangers that had settled in the land of Israel.

1. Undoubtedly these would be the Samaritans.

2. They had replaced the Israelites in Jerusalem after Sargon had exiled them – 2 Kings 17:6.

3. The Assyrian settlers intermarried with the remnant of Israelite women, and their descendants, a mongrel race, went under the name of Samaritans.

B. The word is also understood to mean, at times, "persecutors".

Verse 2

1. ...let us build with you: for we seek you God as ye *do*.....

- A. These only accepted the Pentateuch as being Scripture.
  - B. They worshipped God, but not in the exclusive way that the Israelites did.
    - 1. They were Polytheistic in their belief of God – 2 Kings 17:33.
    - 2. The first part of their statement was true.
      - A. But this part was not.
  - 2. ...since the days of Esar-haddon...
    - A. Esar-haddon reigned Assyria from 681-668 B.C.
      - 1. He was also a military leader and a political ruler – 2 Kings 19:37; Isa. 37:38.
- Verse 3
- 1. ...Ye have nothing to do with us...
    - A. Whatever the motives this decision to refuse to allow the Samaritans to assist in the building of the Temple was a good one.
      - 1. To do otherwise would have resulted in nothing more than intermarriages and such that would have taken Israel back into idolatry.
        - A. Thus there would have been a lessening of the purity that was to be found.
    - B. Besides this, it would have been contrary to the decree given by Cyrus.
- Verse 4
- 1. ...weakened the hands of the people...
    - A. The Samaritans endeavored by every means to obstruct the progress of the building of the Temple.
      - 1. Perhaps reference to the deeds of Sanballat and his followers – Neh. 4:1-12.
- Verse 5
- 1. And hired counselors against them...
    - A. The obtaining of those who would bribe certain people within the Persian Courts to delay the work being done.
      - 1. It seems that their success in those underhand dealings was great.
      - 2. Cyrus, because of his expeditions of war, left the government in the hands of his son Cambyses, who was a wicked prince, and extremely hostile to the Jews and their religion.
        - A. Because of this, for a period of twenty years, the progress of the work was very slow.
  - 2. ...all the days of Cyrus...
    - A. Cyrus died in 529 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Cambyses.
      - 1. Who reigned over Persia from 529 to 522 B.C. when he went mad.
    - B. Historians speak of Pseudo Smerdis (also referred to as Bardes) who usurped the throne for a period of about seven months – 522 B.C.
  - 3. ...even until the reign of Darius...
    - A. Darius the Great reigned from 522 – 486 B.C.
      - 1. Also known as Darius Hystaspis.
- Verse 6
- 1. And in the reign of Ahasuerus...
    - A. Persian form of the name of Xerxes.
      - 1. Some debate among the scholars as to which Xerxes this is.

- B. It seems best to me to say that it probably refers to Cambyses since it was very common for kings to have more than one name.
  - 1. Also, it appears that we are looking at chronology and Cambyses would fit here.
- C. Additionally, as we have already noted, Cambyses was hostile against the Jews and did all he could to stop their efforts.

Verse 7

- 1. ...in the days of Artaxerxes...
  - A. Reference to Pseudo Smerdis.
- 2. ...wrote Bishlam...
  - A. Perhaps deputy governor appointed by the king of Persia over all the provinces subject to his empire west of the Euphrates.
- 3. ...written in the Syrian tongue...
  - A. Aramaean language, which is, at times, referred to as Chaldee.
    - 1. Often used by the Persians in their decrees and communications relative to the Jewish nation – 2 Kings 18:26; Isa. 36:11.
  - B. The purpose of their letter was to press the danger of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem upon the royals.

Verse 8

- 1. Rehum...
  - A. Possibly the sub-satrap of the Samaritan province.

Verses 9-16

- 1. ...Asnapper... (v. 10)
  - A. Esar-haddon, who was an official in the king's service whose responsibility it was to settle such issues within their province.
- 2. ...Jews... (v. 12)
  - A. The term Israelite is dropped and is replaced by the term Jew.
  - B. Also, since the word Jew had reference to those from Judah this indicates that the majority of those who returned were from that tribe.
- 3. ...toll... (v. 13)
  - A. Probably a road toll.
- 4. ...tribute... (v. 13)
  - A. The normal tax, which was imposed on every province.
    - 1. Basically, a property tax.
- 5. ...custom... (v. 13)
  - A. Payment in kind.
    - 1. A portion of each crop, etc.
  - B. Thus, an excise tax.
- 6. ...book of the records of thy fathers... (v. 15)
  - A. A book of records kept at the Persian Court – Esther 2:23; 6:1; 10:2.
    - 1. All important events would be recorded in this book.
- 7. ...for which cause was this city destroyed. (v. 15)
  - A. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the city due to their rebellion.
    - 1. However, this had no effect on how the Jews would react to the Persian

Empire as they were anti-idolatrous and friends.

8. ...no portion on this side of the river. (v. 16)

- A. Either the Euphrates or Jordan.

Verses 17-24

1. Give ye now commandment... (v. 21)

- A. Pseudo Smerdis commands that the work of building the wall and the Temple come to a stop.

2. ...until *another* commandment shall be given from me. (v. 21)

- A. Commandments given according to the law of the Medes and Persians were irrevocable – Esth. 1:19; Dan. 6:15.

1. This could have been Smerdis' way of trying to guarantee that the work was not finished.

- A. However, it did not work, as he did not know whom he was up against.

3. ...So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius... (v. 24)

- A. Thus the work was stopped until ca. 520 B.C., which was an interruption of about two years.

1. Some commentators believe that during this time the Jews became somewhat apathetic.

## **EZRA CHAPTER FIVE:**

(Subject: The Work Resumed – Tatnai Writes Darius.)

Verse 1

1. ...Haggai...

- A. The tenth of the so-called Minor Prophets.

1. Here he is the first to prophesy after the return from exile.

- B. It seems that the difficulties experienced had stifled the zeal of the Jews in the building of the temple.

1. This led to an abandonment of the work.

- C. Because of this these two prophets chastised them for their failure to seize the opportunity to begin again - Hag. 1:4.

2. ...Zechariah the son of Iddo...

- A. Zechariah was the eleventh among the Minor Prophets.

1. Rather than being the son of Iddo he was, actually, the grandson.

- A. His father was Berechiah – Zech. 1:1; Mt. 23:35.

1. More than likely Berechiah died while Zechariah was very young and Iddo raised him.

Verse 2

1. Then rose up Zerubbabel...

- A. Haggai's prophecy was directed at these leaders – Hag. 1:1.

Verse 3

1. ...Tatnai...

- A. In opposition to the building of the Temple he writes King Darius.

- B. The same title is given to him as is given to Zerubbabel – Ezra 6:7; Hag. 1:1, 14.

2. ...Shetharboznai...

A. Some sort of a Persian Official.

Verses 4-17

1. But the eye of their God... (v. 5)
  - A. God is watching over the righteous – Job 36:7; Psa. 34:15.
  - B. Even though some attempted to stop them they could not.
    1. Regardless of how high up the government ladder those who opposed the work were, they were up against God.
2. ...the Apharsachites...
  - A. Believed by some to be a form of the word “Persians.”
3. ...a letter... (v. 7)
  - A. It seems that this letter was of a different nature than the previous one that was sent in chapter four.
    1. That one had as its intent the stoppage of the building of the Temple and its surroundings.
    2. This one appears to be an honest one seeking for information and verification.
  - B. There are three reasons given by the Jews for doing what they were doing.
    1. They were servants of God – v. 11.
    2. Cyrus had decreed that the work be done – v. 13.
    3. They were complying with the decree from Cyrus – v. 13.
4. ...and since that time even until now hath it been in building... (v. 16)
  - A. Tatnai used these expressions in his report.
    1. This was not something that the Jews said as they would have known better.

## **EZRA CHAPTER SIX:**

(Subject: The Temple Finished and Dedicated.)

Verse 1

1. ...Darius...
  - A. This was Darius Hystaspes that we saw earlier who ruled Persia 522-486 B.C.
2. ...house of the rolls...
  - A. Literally, in the house of the books.
    1. The ASV states “in the house of the archives” with the footnote “books.”
3. ...the treasures were laid up...
  - A. The same “house” was used to store the precious items of Persia.

Verse 2

1. ...Achmetha...
  - A. Ecbatana, a location in Media.
    1. Believed to be the capital of Greater Media (the Ecbatana of classical, the Hamadan of modern times).
  - B. Darius had three capitals:
    1. Achmetha (Ecbatana) in Media.
    2. Susa in Persia.
    3. Babylon.

Verses 3-12

1. ...threescore cubits... (v. 3)

- A. When compared to Zechariah 4:10; Haggai 2:3, and even Ezra 3:12, one quickly sees a distinct difference in the sizes.
  - 1. It is believed that the difference comes from the higher number being the maximum size.
- 2. ...be ye far from thence. (v. 6)
  - A. It is believed that Darius would not have been so abrupt.
    - 1. Therefore, it has been suggested that only parts of the decree was read.
- 3. ...that which they have need of... (v. 9)
  - A. Same list as seen here is found in Lev. 1:5, 10; 2:1.
- 4. That they may offer sacrifice... (v. 10)
  - A. Two reasons are given by Darius:
    - 1. The Jews can offer sacrifice.
    - 2. The Jews could pray for the king and his sons.
      - A. "His sons" would most likely have reference to the total government.
      - B. We see the command to pray for those in power – Jere. 29:7; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2.
- 5. ...whosoever shall alter this word... (v. 11)
  - A. Should one go beyond this decree he was to be killed and his house turned into a toilet.

#### Verses 13-22

- 1. ...and finished it... (v. 14)
  - A. The foundation was laid in early 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:8-10), and the Temple was finished in February or March 516/515 B.C., twenty-one years after it was begun.
- 2. ...Artaxerxes... (v. 14)
  - A. This would be the successor of Darius.
- 3. ...month Adar... (v. 15)
  - A. The twelfth or last month of the Jewish year.
    - 1. Corresponds to our February/March.
  - B. The Prophet Haggai gives the exact date of the recommencing of the work – Hag. 1:15.
    - 1. This was the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul in Darius's second year.
      - A. Elul was the sixth month of the Hebrew year corresponding with our August/September.
- 4. ...passover... (v. 19)
  - A. The celebration of the Passover commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage through the death of Egypt's firstborn.
- 5. ...fourteenth *day* of the first month. (v. 19)
  - A. The first month would be Nisan.
  - B. The day fixed by the Law of Moses – Ex. 12:6.
  - C. With this verse Ezra returns to use the Hebrew language from which he had deviated in chapter 4:8 and began to use the Chaldee.
- 6. ...filthiness of the heathen of the land... (v. 21)
  - A. Those who had been morally defiled.
  - B. Reference to those who had given satisfactory evidence of being true proselytes.

1. By renouncing the impure worship of idolatry.
2. Undergoing the rite of circumcision.
  - A. A condition, which was indispensable if one was to participate in the Passover.
7. ...the feast of unleavened bread... (v. 22)
  - A. This was required by the Law – Ex. 12:15; 13:7; Lev. 23:6, et.al.
    1. Feast began on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan and would occur sometime between mid-March and mid-April – Ex. 12:3, 6, 17-20.
    2. No work was to be performed during the festival.
    3. It derived its name from the Mazzoth, or unleavened cakes, which was the only type of bread allowed during the Passover week.
    4. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day pilgrimage festival following Passover.
  - B. The Feast of Unleavened Bread occurs simultaneously with Passover beginning the day after Passover eve and lasting for seven days.
    1. Because they are so closely related in time and purpose, the names are often used interchangeably.

## **EZRA CHAPTER SEVEN:**

(Subject: Ezra Authorized To Lead A Return.)

Verses 1–10

1. Now after these things... (v. 1)
  - A. It should be noted that some fifty plus years pass between chapters six and seven.
2. ...reign of Artaxerxes... (v. 1)
  - A. The Artaxerxes of Esther.
3. ...Ezra the son of Seraiah... (v. 1)
  - A. Commentators differ widely on the exact relationship here.
    1. The only thing they agree on is that Ezra was not the son of Seraiah.
      - A. He was a grandson, great grandson, or great-great grandson.
  - B. The genealogy that is given here is incomplete.
    1. From the exodus to the present time 1,000 or so years past.
      - A. That period of time could not be covered by sixteen generations.
    2. 1 Chronicles 6:7-10 fills some of the gap.
    3. 1 Chronicles 9:11 adds one more name.
      - A. These would total twenty-seven generations, which would more closely fit the time frame under consideration.
4. ...he *was* a ready scribe... (v. 6)
  - A. This indicates that he was learned in the Law.
5. ...law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given... (v. 6)
  - A. Note here that the Law of Moses came from the Lord – 2 Chron. 31:3; 34:14.
6. ...Nethinims... (v. 7)
  - A. Go back to Ezra 2:43 and see your notes there.
7. ...fifth month... (v. 8)
  - A. Av, corresponding to our July/August.



- B. He left Babylon on the Jewish New Year's Day.
  - 1. The journey must have taken four months.
    - A. This is longer than what one would expect.
    - B. However, it was necessary for them to move at a slow pace since they were traveling in a large caravan of poor people, including women, children, and all their household items.
- 8. For Ezra had prepared his heart... (v. 10)
  - A. His desire had been to study the divine law and all that pertains to it.
    - 1. Later, in Ezra 10:10, 11 and Nehemiah 8:2-18 we see him appear as a teacher of righteousness.
  - B. Here is a good set of sermon "bones."
    - 1. Ezra:
      - A. Prepared his heart.
      - B. To seek the Law of the Lord.
      - C. And to do it.
      - D. And to teach its statutes and ordinances.
    - 2. What about you?
- 9. ...to teach... (v. 10)
  - A. The word "teach" (Lamad) used here has reference to the idea of beating with a rod, chastise, to train, to teach a custom.
    - 1. Take a look at Matthew 23:3; Romans 2:21; and James 3:1.

#### Verses 11-28

- 1. Now this *is* the copy of the letter... (v. 11)
  - A. The decree given to Ezra authorized him to do certain things.
    - 1. It appears that this was a private copy presented only to Ezra.
      - A. It is what is referred to as a firman.
  - B. The decree describes the nature of Ezra's commission along with the extent of power and prerogatives with which he was invested.
    - 1. First, he was empowered to carry a large donation in money to make suitable provision for maintaining the regular worship of God in Jerusalem - Ezra 7:16, 17.
    - 2. Second, the Persian officers were commanded to provide for him every assistance in carrying out the objects of his mission - Ezra 7:21.
    - 3. It granted power that all who were involved in any sort of sacerdotal order was provided a tax exemption.
      - A. Sacerdotal - Of or relating to priests or the priesthood; priestly.
    - 4. It presented him with authority to organize the colony in Judea and institute a regular government, according to the laws of the Hebrew people - Ezra 7:25, 26.
- 2. ...the priest... (v. 11)
  - A. When one considers Ezra's genealogy they see the inference - Ezra 7:1-5.
    - 1. No where else, except in this context, does he refer to himself as being a priest although Nehemiah does in chapter 8:2, 9.
- 3. ...seven counsellors... (v. 14)

- A. The fixed number of the private council of the kings of Persia - Esther 1:10, 14.
    - 1. Some scholars suggest that there was a pre-eminent seven family group of which the heads of those families served in this capacity.
- 4. Unto a hundred talents... (v. 22)
  - A. A limit placed here with the extent being no more than 100 talents of silver.
    - 1. Depending on whose figures one uses the amount can be very large.
- 5. ...a hundred measures of wheat... (v. 22)
  - A. Literally, 100 “cors” of wheat.
  - B. Somewhere between 44 and 86 gallons each.
- 6. ...a hundred baths of wine... (v. 22)
  - A. The largest of the liquid measurements.
    - 1. Equal to the ephah, or the same as one-tenth homer – Ezek. 45:11.
    - 2. Equal to approximately seven and a half gallons.
  - B. The word “wine” can be used to describe intoxicating and non-intoxicating fruit of the vine.
    - 1. Used in 214 verse in the K.J.V.
    - 2. Can speak of the “wine in the cluster” – Isa. 65:8.
  - C. Context needs to determine what is under consideration.
- 7. ...an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing... (v. 22)
  - A. They were permitted to withdraw up to these amounts without having to explain.
- 8. ...and teach ye them... (v. 25)
  - A. “Yeda,” meaning to cause to see, perceive, understand, or know.
- 9. ...and the law of the king... (v. 26)
  - A. Pertaining to the civil government.
  - B. God instituted the civil government process and intends for man to follow it – Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

## **EZRA CHAPTER EIGHT:**

(Subject: Ezra’s Return.)

Verses 1-14

- 1. ...chief of their fathers... (v. 1)
  - A. Refer back to Ezra 2:68 on the phrase “chief.”
  - B. The total number of adult males here is something over 1,750 when you include the Levites and the Nethinims.
- 2. ...genealogy... (v. 1)
  - A. These were important because only those who could trace their genealogy back to Jewish ancestors could actually be counted as part of the Jewish nation.

Verses 15-20

- 1. ...to the river that runneth to Ahava... (v. 15)
  - A. This river has not been ascertained.
    - 1. It seems evident that it was one of the streams or canals of Mesopotamia connecting with the Euphrates.
  - B. Some scholars believe that it is the Is of Herodotus, but that is speculation.
- 2. ...found there none of the sons of Levi. (v. 15)

- A. Literally, none of the ordinary Levites.
  - 1. In chapter 2:36-40 we see that only seventy-four had gone up with Zerubbabel.
- B. As to why they had been disinclined to return is not revealed.
- 3. Then I sent... (v. 16)
  - A. Ezra sends for the chief men and others.
- 4. ...Iddo... (v. 17)
  - A. Iddo's influence resulted in thirty-eight Levites (vrs. 18, 19), and two hundred twenty Nethinims (v. 20) coming to the temple.
- 5. ...Casiphia... (v. 17)
  - A. Precise location is unknown.
- 6. Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed... (v. 20)
  - A. Nothing is mentioned about this in any other Scripture.

#### Verse 21

- 1. ...we might afflict ourselves...
  - A. In Leviticus 16:29 the Jews had been told to afflict themselves on the Day of Atonement.
    - 1. This affliction came about by their fasting and refusing to bathe.
- 2. ...to seek of him a right way for us...
  - A. Reference to the idea of a safe way to Jerusalem.

#### Verses 22-23

- 1. For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers... (v. 22)
  - A. There was danger of their being attacked by Bedouin Arabs.
    - 1. However, Ezra had indicated that God would take care of them and he could hardly ask for a military escort.

#### Verses 24-36

- 1. Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests... (v. 24)
  - A. The priests were assigned to Sherebiah and Hashabiah and ten of their brethren as per the LXX.
    - 1. Literally, the idea is that twelve priests were assigned to twelve Levites, including Sherebiah and Hashabiah, to deal with matters of the royal offering.
- 2. ...talents of silver and gold... (v. 26)
  - A. Appears to have been equal to the weight that a man may carry – 2 Kings 5:23.
  - B. Scholars do not necessarily agree on the value of the talent.
    - 1. Some have estimated that the value of the talent could be in the area of \$2,000.00 for the silver talent and \$30,000.00 for the gold talent.
- 3. ...two vessels of fine copper... (v. 27)
  - A. More than likely these vessels were not copper as copper was very common in use in Babylon.
    - 1. Whatever it was, it was valued very highly.

### **EZRA CHAPTER NINE:**

(Subject: Ezra Grieves Over The Mixed Marriages.)

#### Verse 1

1. ...have not separated themselves from the people of the lands...
  - A. What was being said is that a large number of the Jews, in violation of the divine law (Deut. 7:2, 3), had contracted marriages with the women from the heathen nations that surrounded them.
  - B. Note that it appears that many of the people, including the Levites, were involved in this activity.
2. ...according to their abominations...
  - A. Better, in respect of their abominations.
    1. The main point here is that of the idolatry that was practiced by the heathen nations and could very well begin with the Jews again since their spouses would influence them.
  - B. Now I know all the arguments about Christians marrying non-Christians, but if someone is marrying another who will turn their heart against God it is an abomination in the eyes of God.
    1. It does not matter how we look at it.
      - A. The only thing that matters is how does God look at it!

#### Verse 2

1. ...holy seed...
  - A. Consider Isaiah 6:13 in respect to this.
2. ...the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief...
  - A. The leaders had been the chief offenders – Ezra 10:18.

#### Verse 3

1. ...I rent my garment and my mantle...
  - A. Ezra tore the outer and inner garment that he wore.
    1. Such was a token of great grief and dread.
2. ...plucked off the hair of my head...
  - A. Not a common occurrence.
    1. Normally the head and beard were shaved – Job 1:20.
  - B. Undoubtedly, this indicates the great degree of grief and concern that Ezra had.

#### Verse 4

1. ...every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel...
  - A. Either those pious people who revered God's Word joined him in bewailing the public sin, and sought for ways to resolve the issue.
  - B. Or, those who knew the law and what would be the conclusion of it all – Deut. 7:4.
    1. Take a look at Isaiah 66:2.

#### Verses 5 - 15

1. ...I am ashamed and blush... (v. 6)
  - A. Jeremiah stated that those in his day who committed abominations were not ashamed and could not blush – Jere. 6:15; 8:12.
    1. Ezra is now compelled to open up to God and reveal his innermost feelings.
2. Since the days of our fathers... (v. 7)
  - A. A broad reference to the fathers of the nation of Israel – Neh. 9:6-35; Acts 7:2-53.
3. ...to confusion of face... (v. 7)

- A. Delivered to disgrace and shame – Psa. 44:13-15.
- 4. And now for a little space grace hath been *shewed*... (v. 8)
  - A. I thought some are teaching that the Old Testament only showed law and no grace?
    - 1. Take a concordance and run the word grace in the O.T. and see what you come up with.
      - A. Although it is not found, as many times as the N.T., that does not mean that it was unheard of until the N.T.
- 5. ...give us a nail in his holy place... (v. 8)
  - A. Perhaps reference to the idea that they have a firm hold where they are.
    - 1. A good leader was to be a tent peg – Zech. 10:4.
- 6. ...a little reviving...(v. 8)
  - A. Revival!
    - 1. Take a look at Psalm 85:6.
- 7. ...it is an unclean land... (v. 11)
  - A. See Deuteronomy 12:2, 3 and Leviticus 18:6-27 on this.
  - B. The land was made unclean by their transgressing the law of God – Rom. 2:14.
- 8. ...give not your daughters unto their sons... (v. 12)
  - A. Reference to Exodus 34:16 and Deuteronomy 7:3.
  - B. This passage is the only location where both injunctions are contained.
- 9. ...that ye may be strong... (v. 12)
  - A. Take a look at Galatians 6:7, 8 on this.
    - 1. Also Deuteronomy 11:8.
- 10. Should we again break thy commandments...(v. 14)
  - A. Returning to sin is foolishness – 2 Pet. 2:20-24.

### **EZRA CHAPTER TEN:**

(Subject: Mixed Marriages Abandoned.)

Verses 1 – 8

- 1. And Shechaniah... (v. 2)
  - A. Apparently one of the leading men, who had not been involved in this abomination.
- 2. ...yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. (v. 2)
  - A. The hope is seen in the next verse and their compliance with it.
  - B. Repentance was in order and true repentance demands the putting away that which is wrong – Acts 2:38; 3:19; 2 Cor. 7:9, 10.
- 3. ...And they sware. (v. 5)
  - A. From “sheba” to swear or to “seven” oneself.
    - 1. Since seven is a perfect or sacred number, to “seven” oneself is to make an oath.
- 4. ...Johanan... (v. 6)
  - A. A priest.
  - B. This appears to have been a private council of the princes and elders.

1. During the council it was determined to enter into a covenant with God to put away their foreign wives and children.
2. Additionally, a proclamation was made for all who had returned from Babylon to gather at Jerusalem within three days – verse 7.
  - A. If they failed to do so they would be separated from the congregation and their property would be confiscated – verse 8.

Verses 9-17

1. ...ninth month... (v. 9)
  - A. The month Kislev, which corresponds with our November/December.
    1. During the rainy season.
2. Now therefore... (v. 11)
  - A. Make confession.
  - B. Do his pleasure (i.e. will).
  - C. Separate yourselves from the people and the land.
  - D. Separate yourselves from the strange wives.
3. ...so must we do. (v. 12)
  - A. “Must” implies an absolute moral necessity or obligation.
4. were employed about this *matter*... (v. 15)
  - A. It seems that Jonathan and Jahaziah were opposed to the decision.
    1. Take a look at 1 Chronicles 21:1; Daniel 8:25; 11:14 to see locations where the phrase has the sense of opposition.
    2. See the ASV where it says they “stood up against this *matter*.”
  - B. We see in the next verse that Ezra and “certain chiefs of the fathers” conducted the examination of the issue.
    1. To say that Jonathan and Jahaziah did so would contradict this passage.
5. ...tenth month... (v. 16)
  - A. The month Tevet, which corresponds with our December/January.
6. ...first month. (v. 17)
  - A. The month Nisan, which corresponds with our March/April.

Verses 18-44

1. And among the sons of the priests... (v. 18)
  - A. There are so many men of rank appearing in the following list.
    1. In examination of the names listed one quickly realizes the difficulties associated with the work of restoration.
2. ...*some* of them had wives by whom they had children. (v. 44)
  - A. Answers the quibble offered by some about those in unscriptural marriages which may have children and whether they should dissolve that marriage in view of the children.
    1. God hates divorce – Mal. 2:16.
    2. However, this does not imply that he hates divorce any less than unscriptural marriages.
      - A. I hate getting a shot, but I don’t hate it as bad as being ill.

## **NEHEMIAH BACKGROUND NOTES**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Captivity:
  - A. Judah came under Babylon's control with the first captives being taken in 606 B.C. - Dan 1:1-7.
  - B. Two deportations of captives followed in 597 and 586 B.C.
  - C. The captivity was prophesied by Jeremiah to last seventy years – Jere. 25:12; 29:10.
  - D. Although we have no details of these seventy years, Ezra and Nehemiah continue the history with the event of their return home - Ezra 1:1-4.
2. Ezra and Nehemiah filled different roles yet worked compatibly to effect a spiritual revival and restoration.
3. This book is named for Nehemiah, as it is his career it traces.

### **BACKGROUND:**

1. Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book until just recently in history.
  - A. In Baba Bathra 15a Ezra and Nehemiah were considered as one book.
    1. This was with the understanding that Ezra began the writing and Nehemiah finished it.
    2. The Latin Vulgate calls Nehemiah the Second Book of Ezra.
    3. In a Hebrew manuscript dated 1448 the division into two books was introduced and it is still maintained this way in modern Hebrew Bibles.
2. The books were probably written by the men whose names they bear.
  - A. Both have their central characters speaking frequently in the first person - Ezra 8:15; Neh 1:1.
  - B. Both used a number of sources to produce their books - Ezra 1: 2-4; 4:8-10; 6:3.
  - C. Just as the people had gone into captivity in three stages so was their return in three stages.
    1. 536 B.C. - Zerubbabel led the first group home and the temple was rebuilt and dedicated in 515 B.C.
    2. 458 B.C. – Ezra brought home a second group of captives and a great spiritual revival occurred.
    3. 445 B.C. - Nehemiah led the last group of exiles home and rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem.
  - D. Nehemiah's name comes from the Hebrew "Nehem-yah" which means "the comfort of Jehovah," or "whom Jehovah has comforted."

### **THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH:**

1. Ezra and Nehemiah tell of the restoration of the Jews to their homeland.
  - A. They show God as a promise-keeper to His people.
  - B. They emphasize the people's duty to be holy.
  - C. The major subject of Nehemiah is the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

2. Nehemiah was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes I of Persia – Neh. 1:11-2:1.
  - A. Though secure in a position of honor, he grieved over Jerusalem’s desolation and wanted to restore it.
  - B. Thirteen years after Ezra began his work at Jerusalem, Nehemiah appeared in the role of civil governor and set about his task.
  - C. Nehemiah was obviously held in high esteem in his position in Persia or he could not have asked for the governorship of Judah and received it.
  - D. Nehemiah held the governorship twice:
    1. First time in 445 B.C.
    2. Second time in 433 B.C.
3. The book records Nehemiah’s mission to Jerusalem and the reforms he instituted there.
  - A. Unlike Ezra, Nehemiah was a “layman.”
  - B. But his work complimented Ezra’s and Jehovah used the two of them in establishing the post-exilic nation.
4. Even liberal scholars say this book is historically accurate.

#### **NEHEMIAH OUTLINE:**

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| 1. The Wall Is Rebuilt And Reforms On Nehemiah’s First Visit....                  | Ch 1-7.   |
| A. Nehemiah Hears of Jerusalem’s Helplessness.....                                | Ch 1.     |
| B. Nehemiah Comes to Jerusalem.....   | Ch 2.     |
| C. Rebuilding of the Wall Described.....  | Ch 3.     |
| D. Enemies Try to Block Construction.....   | Ch 4.     |
| E. Internal Difficulties Arise and are Overcome.....                              | Ch 5.     |
| F. More Resistance from Enemies but the Wall is Completed..                       | Ch 6.     |
| G. Nehemiah Finds the Last of First Returning Exiles.....                         | Ch 7.     |
| 2. The Law Is Read In Public And Its Ceremonies Are Resumed...                    | Ch 8-10.  |
| A. The Law is Read and the Feast of Tabernacles is Kept.....                      | Ch 8.     |
| B. The Levites Lead in a Psalm of Confession.....                                 | Ch 9.     |
| C. The People Make Vows of Faithfulness.....                                      | Ch 10.    |
| 3. Reforms On Nehemiah’s Second Visit.....  | Ch 11-13. |
| A. The Residents of Jerusalem and Names of Other Cities are Listed.....           | Ch 11.    |
| B. Priests and Levites are Listed and the Wall is Dedicated.....                  | Ch 12.    |
| C. Foreigners Expelled and Religious Reforms Instituted to Purify the Nation..... | Ch 13.    |

#### **COMMENTARY**

##### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER ONE:**

(Subject: Nehemiah Hears of Jerusalem’s Helplessness.)

Verse 1

1. ...in the month Chisleu...
  - A. Kislev, the ninth month, corresponds with our November/December.
    1. Chisleu probably was Persian.



- A. Found here and in Zechariah 7:1, where it says that it is the ninth month.
        - 1. Corresponding more with our December.
    - 2. ...in the twentieth year...
      - A. I.e. the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus – Ezra 2:1.
        - 1. Therefore the year 446/445 B.C.
    - 3. ...Shushan the palace.
      - A. Susa was located about 200 miles east of Babylon.
        - 1. This is where Daniel saw the vision of the ram – Dan. 8:2.
      - B. Susa was the capital of Kissia.
- Verse 2
- 1. ...Hanani...
    - A. Some relative of Nehemiah.
      - 1. In chapter 7:2 he is referred to as the brother of Nehemiah.
        - A. Not all scholars agree that he was the actual physical brother, but there is no way to determine for sure.
      - B. He is later given the charge of the gates of the city of Jerusalem – Nehemiah 7:2.
  - 2. ...and I ask them concerning the Jews that had escaped...
    - A. Josephus states of this “As this man (Nehemiah, R.W.S.) was walking before Susa, the metropolis of the Persians, he heard some strangers that were entering the city, after a long journey, speaking to one another in the Hebrew tongue; so he went to them and asked from whence they came; and when their answer was, that they came from Judea, he began to inquire of them again in what state the multitude was, and in what condition Jerusalem was...”
      - 1. Note that Josephus refers to Hanani as a stranger for whatever that is worth.
- Verse 3
- 1. ...in great affliction and reproach...
    - A. “Affliction” would refer to their physical condition while “reproach” would refer to their mental state.
      - 1. I guess you could say that nothing was coming up roses!
  - 2. ...the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down...
    - A. The commissions that had been previously given to Zerubbabel and Ezra extended only to the repair of the temple and private dwellings.
      - 1. The walls and gates of the city had been allowed to remain a mass of shattered ruins.
- Verse 4
- 1. ...that I sat down and wept...
    - A. Note Nehemiah’s entire reaction to the news he received:
      - 1. He wept.
      - 2. He mourned.
      - 3. He fasted.
      - 4. He prayed.
    - B. All of this says a lot about Nehemiah!
- Verse 5
- 1. ...terrible God...

- A. Not “terrible” in the modern day sense.
  - 1. Better, as per the NKJV, “awesome.”
- 2. ...mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments.
  - A. Take a look at John 14:15; 1 John 5:2,3.
    - 1. This principle is not new to the New Testament.
      - A. Consider Deut. 7:9; 30:16; Josh. 22:5; 1 Kings 8:58.

Verse 6

- 1. ...hear the prayer of thy servant...
  - A. Not as a priest such as Ezra.
- 2. ...day and night...
  - A. Nehemiah was persistent in his prayer to God.
- 3. ...and my father’s house have sinned.
  - A. Nehemiah acknowledges that what happened to Judah was because of their transgressions against God.
    - 1. Recall the reason why Judah was taken into captivity.
      - A. Because of their wickedness.

Verse 7

- 1. ...very corruptly...
  - A. Here acknowledgment of the sins of commission.
- 2. ...and have not kept the commandments...
  - A. Here acknowledgment of the sins of omission.
  - B. The word “commandments” has reference to that which is commanded.
- 3. ...nor the statutes...
  - A. Something that was decreed or prescribed.
    - 1. As if it was set in stone.
- 4. ...nor the judgments...
  - A. Literally, ordinances or law.
- 5. ...which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.
  - A. Points out that these were part and partial to the Law given to Moses.

Verse 8

- 1. ...*If* ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations.
  - A. Nehemiah was well learned of the teachings of the Scriptures that had been given up to this time.
    - 1. Here he makes reference to Leviticus 26:33.

Verse 9

- 1. But *if* ye turn unto me...
  - A. Reference to Deuteronomy 30:2-4.
- 2. ...cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven...
  - A. Although they had held a place of prominence before God they sinned and this resulted in their being “cast out.”
    - 1. Take a look at the ASV and the NKJV and note the word “heavens.”
- 3. ...will I gather them from thence...
  - A. Reference to Deuteronomy 30:4; 9:29.
    - 1. Repentance and restoration.

- A. But restoration demands repentance – Acts 8:22.
- 4. ...unto the place that I have chosen...
  - A. Reference to Deuteronomy 12:5.
    - 1. A relationship with God.
    - 2. The promised land.
    - 3. A restoration to Judah.
- Verse 10
  - 1. ...whom thou hast redeemed...
    - A. Reference to Exodus 32:11; Deuteronomy 9:29.
      - 1. There are none who have been redeemed who have not been redeemed by God!
- Verse 11
  - 1. ...who desire...
    - A. Literally, “delight” – Psa. 12:2; Rom. 7:22.
  - 2. ...and prosper...
    - A. Do what God says and prosper.
  - 3. ...and grant him...
    - A. Artaxerxes.
      - 1. Nehemiah is praying to God that Artaxerxes will have an open ear to the pleas of the people.
      - 2. He knows that if he is to get done what he wants he must have permission.
  - 4. ...For I was the king’s cupbearer.
    - A. He was a person of rank and importance.
      - 1. Also, according to Oriental custom, he was in a position of confidence before the King.
        - A. I want you to think about that the next time someone comes along and suggest that Christians should not form allegiance with those of power.

## **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER TWO:**

(Subject: Nehemiah Comes To Jerusalem.)

Verse 1

- 1. ...Nisan...
  - A. First month corresponding with our March/April.
- 2. ...the twentieth year of Artaxerxes...
  - A. The twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes.
- 3. ...*that* wine was set before him...
  - A. Doesn’t prove anything in so far as “social drinking” is concerned.
    - 1. Artaxerxes was a heathen king.
- 4...Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence.
  - A. Everyone who came before the king was to be cheerful.
    - 1. Those who presented themselves in any other way took their lives into their hands.

Verse 2

- 1. ...Why is thy countenance sad...

- A. Artaxerxes knew Nehemiah well enough to know his “countenance” was sad.
  - 1. This confirms a relatively close connection.
- B. No one was allowed to come before the king with such a sad countenance – Esth. 4:2.
  - 1. Undoubtedly, this was why Nehemiah was afraid.
  - 2. His life could have been taken according to Oriental custom.

#### Verse 3

- 1. ...why should not my countenance be sad...
  - A. Nehemiah begins to “unload” his burden on Artaxerxes.
    - 1. Note that Nehemiah began with great respect for the king’s position.
      - A. Remember, as Christians we have a similar responsibility – 1 Pet. 2:13-15.
- 2. ...the place of my father’s sepulchers, *lieth* waste...
  - A. This statement would, in Oriental custom, strike a sympathetic response.
    - 1. Persians had a great respect for the tomb of the dead.
      - A. To violate one was to commit a horrendous crime.
  - B. Nehemiah may not have known the extent of the rebuilding and what had been accomplished to this point.
    - 1. Remember, he had been told that the wall was broken down and the gates were burned.
      - A. From this he may have concluded that things were still a mess.

#### Verse 4

- 1. ...So I prayed to the God of heaven.
  - A. Nehemiah prayed as he made request to the king.
    - 1. Someone has said, “We should pray as if everything depends on God, and work as if everything depends on us.”
    - 2. Fairly much what is going on here.
      - A. Nehemiah relied upon God, but not to do what he should do.
  - B. Nehemiah seemed to be a very prayerful person – Neh. 4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:4, etc.

#### Verses 5-8

- 1. ...(the queen also sitting by him)...(v. 6)
  - A. Indicates that this was a social time.
  - B. Several commentators suggest that this could have been Esther.
    - 1. If so, then she would have encouraged the king to comply with the wishes of Nehemiah.
  - C. As to who the queen is, of course, depends on who the king is that is under consideration in this chapter.
- 2. ...he may give me... (v. 8)
  - A. Nehemiah is given supplies to:
    - 1. Rebuild the temple.
    - 2. Repair the walls and gates.
    - 3. Build himself a house where he would live as governor.

#### Verses 9-10

- 1. When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant...(v. 10)

- A. Sanballat was satrap of Samaria under the Persian reign.
    - 1. Reference to his being a “Haronite” indicates he was born at one of the two Beth-harons, which would have made him belonging to Ephraim, now under Samaria.
    - 2. Name meant “sin gives life,” which was an Assyrian moon god.
  - B. Tobiah was the governor of the Ammonites.
    - 1. His name meant “pleasing to Jehovah.”
    - 2. It appears that he was a freed slave who was elevated to a position of importance.
  - 2. ...grieved them exceedingly... (v. 10)
    - A. Zerubbabel had previously rejected assistance from the Samaritans in the rebuilding of the Temple – Ezra 4:3.
      - 1. From this point on an enmity existed between the two peoples.
- Verses 11 - 19
- 1. ...by the gate of the valley... (v. 13)
    - A. This could be the Jaffa gate, near the tower of Hippicus, in the southern part of the city of Jerusalem although it is not possible to say for sure.
  - 2. ...and to the dung port... (v. 13)
    - A. This would be the gate through which there ran a sewer to the brook Kidron and the valley of Hinnom.
  - 3. ...the gate of the fountain... (v. 14)
    - A. A gate near the pool of Siloam.
  - 4. ...the king’s pool... (v. 14)
    - A. Perhaps the same location as the “gate of the fountain.”
  - 5. ...by the brook... (v. 15)
    - A. The brook Kidron.
      - 1. This brook skirted the city on the eastern side.
  - 6. ...and entered the gate of the valley... (v. 15)
    - A. This could possibly be the gate leading to the valley of Jehoshaphat.
    - B. It appears that Nehemiah had skirted part of the city to the northeastern side and then returned to where he started.
  - 7. ...Ye see the distress that we *are* in... (v. 17)
    - A. Up to now Nehemiah had not revealed his intentions.
      - 1. However, all that changes.
    - B. He now includes himself with those who are at work.
      - 1. Note, “we,” “us,” and “we.”
  - 8. ...Geshem the Arabian heard *it*, they laughed us to scorn... (v. 19)
    - A. Later he is called Gashmu – chapter 6:6.
      - 1. Some have suggested that he may have been a sheikh who possessed authority from Idumea.
  - 9. ...will ye rebel against the king? (v. 19)
    - A. Since Nehemiah had received permission to do what he was to do this, of course, is false.

### NEHEMIAH CHAPTER THREE:

(Subject: Rebuilding of the Wall Described.)

Verse 1

A. ...Eliashib...

A. In Nehemiah 12:10, 11 we see that he was the son of Joiakim, and the grandson of Jeshua, who had returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel – Ezra 2:2; 3:2.

B. In Nehemiah 13:4 he is pictured as being “allied” to Tobiah.

1. This is believed to be due to the marriage of their children.

C. Note that Eliashib took part in the work himself.

B. ...sheep gate...

A. A gate in the eastern wall of the city, close to the pool of Bethesda.

1. It was called the “sheep gate” as it was through this gate that the sheep, which were to be sacrificed, were brought.

A. They would have first been washed in the pool of Bethesda and then taken on to be offered.

C. ...they sanctified it...

A. Literally, a dedication.

1. A separate one from the one seen in Nehemiah 12:27-43.

A. That one was more of a general dedication while this one was more of a special one just for this area.

D. ...tower of Meah...

A. Literally, the tower of Hammeah.

E. ...tower of Hananeel.

A. These towers appear to have been extremely close to one another.

Verse 2

1. ...next unto him builded the men of Jericho...

A. The work was divided among the families that had returned from captivity.

Verse 3

1. ...the fish gate...

A. This section was in the northeastern part of the wall.

1. Some commentators believe that it was referred to as the “fish gate” because it was the gate through which the fish from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River were brought to be sold.

Verses 4-32

1. ...the Tekoites... (v. 5)

A. Literally, the people from Tekoah.

1. Does not appear in any of the lists of those who returned from captivity – Ezra 2:20-35; Neh. 7:25-38.

A. Or in the census list – Neh. 11:25-35.

B. The “wise woman” who Joab sent to David was from Tekoah – 2 Kings 14:2, 3.

2. ...but their nobles put not their necks to the work... (v. 5)

A. Literally, they did not put their shoulders to the work.

1. It appears that they neither supported the work nor assisted with it.

B. Reminds one of the work of the Lord today.

1. Many will withdraw themselves from it.
3. ...the old gate... (v. 6)
  - A. Possibly the Damascus gate.
    1. Only mention of it is here.
4. ...unto the throne of the governor this side of the river. (v. 7)
  - A. Maybe the throne of the governor of Syria.
    1. Seems there were those who were not under the government of Nehemiah but under the rule of another.
5. ...broad wall. (v. 8)
  - A. The wall was a “double wall” and extended from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate.
    1. It was four hundred cubits in length.
  - B. It had formerly been broken down by Joash, king of Israel – 2 Chron. 25:23.
    1. Later it was rebuilt by Uzziah - 2 Chron. 26:9.
    2. It was so strong that the Chaldeans, finding it difficult to demolish, left it standing.
6. ...ruler of the half part of Jerusalem. (v. 9)
  - A. Literally, of the half part of the territory surrounding the city.
    1. This area was divided into two sections, under two “rulers” – vrs. 9, 12.
7. ...the tower of the furnaces. (v. 11)
  - A. Not known where this was exactly, although some scholars think it was in the northwestern or western section of the wall.
    1. It is mentioned again in chapter 12:38.
8. ...and his daughters. (v. 12)
  - A. Possibly due to their wealth they undertook to defray the expenses of a part of the wall.
    1. Since the work was dangerous it does not seem that women would have been put to work doing the manual labor – Neh. 4:13-21.
9. The valley gate... (v. 13)
  - A. Located in the western wall.
10. ...Zanoah... (v. 13)
  - A. Located west of Jerusalem.
11. ...a thousand cubits... (v. 13)
  - A. Some commentators believe that this speaks of the section between the Valley gate and the Dung gate and that it was not in need of repair.
12. ...the dung gate... (v. 14)
  - A. This would be the gate through which there ran a sewer to the brook Kidron and the valley of Hinnom - Neh. 2:13.
13. ...gate of the fountain... (v. 15)
  - A. A gate near the pool of Siloam - Neh. 2:14.
14. ...the sepulchers of David... (16)
  - A. Until the time of Hezekiah graves were excavated in the rock upon which the temple stood and the immediate area – Ezek. 43:7-9.
15. ...half part of Keilah... (v. 17)

- A. Literally, the ruler of one-half of the region of Keilah.
  - 1. Probably located in the area of ten to twelve miles southwest of Jerusalem.
- 16. ...court of the prison... (v. 25)
  - A. Each palace had its prison area.
    - 1. We see the “prison gate” mentioned in Nehemiah 12:39.
- 17. ...great tower... (v. 27)
  - A. Suggested to be a tower near the southeast angle of the Temple.
- 18. ...horse gate... (v. 28)
  - A. Located on the eastern wall – Jere. 31:40.
    - 1. This was the gate where horses could enter the city.
- 19. ...the gate Miphkad... (v. 31)
  - A. Probably located in the east wall somewhat south of the sheep gate.
    - 1. This is the only place mentioned.

#### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER FOUR:**

( Subject: Enemies Try to Block Construction.)

Verses 1-3

- 1. ...will they make an end in a day?... (v. 2)
  - A. It seems that he is mocking them in asking, “will they begin and end in a day?”
- 2. ...if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. (v. 3)
  - A. Of course this is not true, but when you are making fun of someone you tend to “stretch” the truth.
  - B. Some commentators think this has reference to the numerous jackals that were prevalent in the area.
    - 1. See the footnote on the ASV.

Verses 4-6

- 1. Hear, O our God... (v. 4)
  - A. Nehemiah is “ticked off.”
  - B. It appears that Nehemiah’s personality was that of one who got “hot” from time to time – Neh. 13:25.
- 2. ...for the people had a mind to work. (v. 6)
  - A. Literally, the idea is that they had the heart to work.
    - 1. Would to God that such could be said of the church today!

Verses 7-11

- 1. ...Arabians... (v. 7)
  - A. Some Commentators see these as people who descended from a colony that Sargon had planted in Samaria.
    - 1. Others see them as one of the tribes that lived in the desert around Jerusalem.
- 2. ...The strength of the bearers of burden is decayed... (v. 10)
  - A. Because many had been pulled off of the construction crew to serve as guards the work became more burdensome for those remaining.
    - 1. The amount of rubbish from the old wall was in the way and added to the problem.
- 3. And our adversaries said... (v. 11)



A. The plan of the enemies was known.

Verses 12-23

1. ...ten times... (v. 12)

A. It appears that the Jews who lived in the outlying towns came and repeatedly warned of what might happen.

2. ...lower places... (v. 13)

A. Literally, the less elevated places.

1. These would be the places where the wall was the most vulnerable.

3. ...Be not ye afraid of them... (v. 14)

A. There was no reason to fear so long as God was on their side.

4. ...when our enemies hear that it was known unto us... (v. 15)

A. When one opposes the people of God, they oppose God Himself.

5. ...we returned all of us to the wall... (v. 15)

A. "To the work, to the work, we are workers for God..."

1. Even though there was the possibility of attack the work of rebuilding needed to go on.

6. ...the half of my servants... (v. 16)

A. Some scholars believe these to be Nehemiah's slaves.

7. ...nor my brethren... (v. 23)

A. Appears to be his physical brothers.

8. ...the men of the guard which followed me... (v. 23)

A. As governor he would have bodyguards.

## **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER FIVE:**

(Subject: Internal Difficulties Arise and Are Overcome.)

Verses 1-5

1. ...a great cry... (v. 1)

A. Literally, a lamentation.

2. ...their brethren... (v. 1)

A. These appear to be the wealthier Jews who took this opportunity to increase their wealth by loaning money at a high rate of interest.

3. ...we take up corn *for them*... (v. 3)

A. It is evident that hunger had increased in the city and now people were mortgaging their crops.

4. ...We have borrowed money for the king's tribute... (v. 4)

A. Go back and review Ezra 4:13.

1. As with all Persian provinces Judaea was to pay its tax.

5. ...we bring into bondage our sons... (v. 5)

A. They had sold their children into slavery and did not possess the power to redeem them.

Verse 6

1. And I was angry...

A. Nehemiah is "ticked off" again.

1. His anger seemed to be directed at the issue of the people being oppressed,

which was against the law – Lev. 25:14, 17.

A. The selling of their children was permissible under the law – Ex. 21:7.

B. The mortgaging of their land was permissible – Lev. 25:14-16.

C. But it was not permissible to oppress the people such as was the case here.

Verse 7

1. ...Ye exact usury...

A. The problem was not that they were loaning money with interest due.

1. That, as we have seen, was permissible.

B. The problem was, they were loaning things knowing full well that the people could not redeem what was put up as collateral, and, therefore, would be forced to forfeit it.

Verse 8

1. ...We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews...

A. Previous to this they had redeemed Jews who were slaves to the heathens.

1. Now, he asks if the Jews were going to be guilty of enslaving others?

2. ...they held their peace...

A. No duh!

1. Wouldn't you zip your lip if presented with such an argument?

Verse 9

1. ...It is not good that ye do...

A. Nehemiah was getting at not just the law, but also the spirit of the law.

1. He told them that they brought reproach upon the people because of their deeds.

A. They were providing the enemies with reason to ridicule the religion of the Jews.

1. Oh how I wish we would learn this lesson when we start "contending for the faith!"

2. Sometimes we can do that which is lawful, but do it in such a way, that we end up doing more harm than good.

A. Especially in the eyes of non-believers.

Verses 10-13

1. ...let us leave off this usury. (v. 10)

A. For the benefit of the good name of the religion of the Jews Nehemiah pleads with them to stop their practice.

2. ...the hundredth *part* of the money... (v. 11)

A. They were beseeched to return all, including the interest.

3. ...and took an oath of them... (v. 12)

A. Nehemiah requires a pledge from them in front of the priests.

1. Insurance!

4. Also I shook my lap... (v. 13)

A. A symbolical act.

1. This was a gathering up of his robe as if he were carrying something and then shaking it out to show it was empty.

#### Verses 14-19

1. ...have not eaten the bread of the governor. (14)
  - A. This was income that was due him, yet he had not taken it.
2. ...because of the fear of God. (v. 15)
  - A. Although others had taken what was due them he did not because he felt to do so would be wrong.
    1. He would not violate his conscience.
3. ...*there were* at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews... (v. 17)
  - A. Nehemiah constantly entertained some 150 chief men at his table.
4. ...because the bondage was heavy upon this people. (v. 18)
  - A. Probably in reference to the tax mentioned in verse four, which was to be paid to the Persian Empire.
5. Think upon me... (v. 19)
  - A. Take a look at Nehemiah 13:14, 22, 31.
  - B. Nehemiah was asking God to reward him according to his deeds.

#### NEHEMIAH CHAPTER SIX:

(Subject: More Resistance from Enemies but the Wall is Completed.)

##### Verses 1-4

1. ...the plain of Ono... (v. 2)
  - A. An invitation to death or severe punishment.
  - B. Ono was located near Lydda, which is located in the plains area bordering on Philistia.
2. ...*I am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down... (v. 3)
  - A. Nehemiah recognizes two things:
    1. If he goes he is in danger.
    2. He has a great work to do.

##### Verses 5-9

1. ...Gashmu saith *it*... (v. 6)
  - A. Here is a list of rumors:
    1. It is reported – v. 6
    2. And Gashmu saith it – v. 6.
      - A. This may be Geshem.
    3. You (singular) are rebuilding the wall – v. 6.
      - A. In other words, you Nehemiah have reported to be doing this yourself.
    4. You want to be king – v. 6.
    5. You have appointed prophets for yourself – v. 7.
    6. This will be reported to the king – v. 7.
    7. Therefore, let us talk it over – v. 7.
  - B. Again, this is an attempt to get Nehemiah alone.
2. ...There are no such things done as thou sayest... (v. 8)
  - A. Nehemiah denies the rumors and accuses Sanballat of being the one starting them.
3. For they all made us afraid... (v. 9)
  - A. The purpose of the rumors was to make the people afraid.

1. But it did not work.
4. ...Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands. (v. 9)
  - A. The phrase “O God” is not in the original.
    1. Either a prayer for his hands to be strengthened or a statement of the fact that that is what had happened.

#### Verses 10-14

1. ...Shemaiah... (v. 10)
  - A. Appears in the list of priests who later sign the covenant – Neh. 10:8.
2. And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him... (v. 12)
  - A. A prophet bringing a message from God would have said, “The Lord saith...”
3. ...that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin... (v. 13)
  - A. The plan was to cause Nehemiah, due to fear, to sin by leaving the city and temple unprotected and then they could discredit him and destroy his effectiveness as a leader.
4. ...the prophetess Noadiah... (v. 14)
  - A. No where else mentioned in the Scriptures.
    1. Most likely bribed by Sanballat and others.

#### Verses 15-19

1. ...*the month* Elul... (v. 15)
  - A. The sixth month corresponding with our August/September.
2. ...in fifty and two days. (v. 15)
  - A. Josephus states that it took two years and four months to complete the wall – Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chapter V, Section 6, p. 237, Kregel Publications.
    1. It seems that the issue of the difference can be explained by understanding that each writer may have been approaching this matter from a different perspective.
      - A. Nehemiah was indicating the actual amount of time involved in the rebuilding while Josephus may have been including travel time, etc.
3. For *there were* many of Judah sworn unto him... (v. 18)
  - A. Many of the Jews showed allegiance to Tobiah due to his having married into the family.
    1. Keep this in mind, “When your father-in-law is the devil you will always have problems!”
4. ...they reported his good deeds before me... (v. 19)
  - A. Those who were in allegiance with Tobiah went so far as to report the good deeds of Tobiah to Nehemiah.

### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER SEVEN:**

(Subject: Nehemiah Finds the Last of First Returning Exiles.)

#### Verses 1-3

1. ...porters... (v. 1)
  - A. Gatekeepers.
2. ...my brother Hanani... (v. 2)

- A. Refer to chapter 1:2.
- 3. ...Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot... (v. 3)
  - A. Normally, the gates would have been opened at dawn.
    - 1. However, it seems that Nehemiah wanted the city “up and at-em” before they were open.
    - 2. This was probably for protection purposes.

#### Verses 4-73

- 1. ...the city was great... (v. 4)
  - A. Although not as great as it used to be.
- 2. ...genealogy... (v. 5)
  - A. This was done to find ways in which those who were still outside of Jerusalem could be brought into the city.
- 3. ...I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first... (v. 5)
  - A. All of this was accomplished according to the normal way of Jewish usage – Num. 1:17-47; 1 Chron. 21:5, 6; Ezra 2:3-62.
  - B. This was the list of those who came back under Zerubbabel and Ezra – Ezra chapters two and seven.
    - 1. You can go back to your notes on Ezra chapter two on this if you wish.
- 4. These sought their register *among* those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found... (v. 64)
  - A. Not found in the genealogical list.
    - 1. Go back and see your notes on Ezra 2:61-63.
- 5. ...the Tirshatha... (v. 65)
  - A. I.e. the governor – see the ASV or the NKJV.
- 6. ...and when the seventh month came... (v. 73)
  - A. The month Tishri which corresponds to our September/October.

### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER EIGHT:**

(Subject: The Law Is Read, and the Feast of Tabernacles is Kept.)

#### Verses 1-8

- 1. ...the book of the law of Moses... (v. 1)
  - A. It is important to grasp that in every genuine revival of the people of God the Word of God is always involved.
  - B. You see that the people gathered themselves.
    - 1. No summons was issued.
  - C. The people speak to Ezra calling for him to bring the book of the Law of Moses.
- 2. And he read therein...from the morning until midday... (v. 3)
  - A. He began as soon as daylight broke and continued until noon.
    - 1. This would put the length of time in the area of six hours.
- 3. ...and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law. (v. 3)
  - A. What a thought.
    - 1. All the people were paying attention to what was being said.
      - A. No one sleeping.
      - B. No one passing notes.

- C. No one playing with kids or grandkids.
    - D. No one checking their watches to see if they were broken.
    - E. No one worrying about beating the heathens to the restaurants.
  - 4. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood... (v. 4)
    - A. Take a look at 2 Kings 11:14; 23:3 which point out that the pulpit was some sort of elevated platform.
  - 5. ...and when he opened it, all the people stood up. (v. 5)
    - A. Standing in such a way was an indication of honor or respect.
      - 1. Whether they stood the entire period of time or not is not determinable.
  - 6. And Ezra blessed the Lord... (v. 6)
    - A. He began by praising God.
  - 7. ...And all the people answered, Amen, Amen... (v. 6)
    - A. Indicative of the intensity of their feelings.
  - 8. ...with lifting up their hands... (v. 6)
    - A. The lifting up of hands was common among the people of that time – Psa. 134:2; 1 Tim. 2:8.
      - 1. Is it prescribed as a way of which worship is to be conducted?
        - A. No, no more than the bowing of the head, the prostrating of oneself on the ground and things of this nature.
      - 2. Is it wrong to do so?
        - A. No, necessarily.
          - 1. Depends on why one is doing it – 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23.
        - B. If it is done to draw attention then one ends up becoming as the Pharisees – Mt. 23:1-5.
  - 9. ...caused the people to understand the law... (v. 7)
    - A. Scripture is understandable!
      - 1. Explanation was given so that they could understand – Acts 8:30, 31.
- Verses 9-12
- 1. ...This day *is* holy unto the Lord your God... (v. 9)
    - A. It was a sanctified day because of the events of the day.
  - 2. ...all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. (v. 9)
    - A. They were made to understand how far they had digressed from the Law.
      - 1. They were “pricked in their heart” – Acts 2:37.
  - 3. ...Go your way, eat the fat... (v. 10)
    - A. Enjoy yourselves.
      - 1. It was a day of joy and not sorrow.
        - A. No fasting, no sorrow, and no tears.
        - B. A sacred feast instead.
  - 4. ...for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (v. 10)
    - A. Power comes through joy.
  - 5. ...because they understood the words that were declared unto them. (v. 12)
    - A. They knew from which they came.
      - 1. And they knew where they were.
        - A. The result?

### 1. JOY!

B. How I wish Christians would live as if they enjoy their religion instead of like they endure it!

1. There is a whole lot more in the N.T. said about joy than there is baptism, but we seldom ever talk about it.

Verses 13-18

1. ...should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month. (v. 14)
  - A. Take a look at Leviticus 23:42.
    1. The actual feast of the tabernacles has been reinstated – Ezra 3:4.
      - A. However, this aspect was left off.
2. ...the street of the gate of Ephraim. (v. 16)
  - A. Perhaps a square located in the northern gateway.
3. ...since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun... (v. 17)
  - A. Jehoshua or Joshua.
  - B. Probably in reference to the degree of joy.
    1. It is evident that the Passover was kept in Josiah's time – 2 Kings 23:22; 2 Chron. 35:18.

### NEHEMIAH CHAPTER NINE:

(Subject: The Levites Lead in a Psalm of Confession.)

Verses 1-5

1. ...sackclothes, and earth upon them. (v. 1)
  - A. Indicative of their sorrow and repentance.
2. ...stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. (v. 2)
  - A. They had followed in the way of their fathers.
3. ...*one* fourth part of the day... (v. 3)
  - A. Days and nights were divided into four parts of three hours each.
    1. Therefore, three hours were devoted to the reading of the law and three hours to confession and worship.

Verses 6-38

1. Thou, *even* thou, *art* Lord alone... (v. 6)
  - A. Verses 6-38 record the longest prayer in the Bible.
    1. Note that Nehemiah begins the prayer by paying honor and respect to God.
2. ...with all their host... (v. 6)
  - A. I.e. the stars or angelic beings.
    1. Stars seem to fit the immediate context.
    2. However, it is clear that the later phrase, "and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" was in reference to angels.
3. ...and madest a covenant with him to give the land... (v. 8)
  - A. Six heathen peoples are mentioned here, but in reality seven were cast out – Deut. 7:1.
    1. Not a problem though as the giving of a part for the whole was common.
4. ...and hast performed they words... (v. 8)
  - A. The land promise was fulfilled – Josh. 21:43-45; 23:14; 1 Kings 4:21; 8:56.

5. ...good spirit... (v. 20)
  - A. Both the ASV and the NKJV has the word “spirit” capitalized.
    1. More than likely reference to the Holy Spirit.
  - B. Remember 2 Timothy 3:16,17.
6. ...thou gavest them kingdoms and nations... (v. 22)
  - A. They had been elevated and were given the promised land, which had been once occupied by a variety of kingdoms and nations.
7. ...and didst divide them into corners... (v. 22)
  - A. Put them into every corner of the Hebrew world.
8. ...as the stars of heaven... (v. 23)
  - A. Recall this was promised to Abram – Gen. 26:4; Ex. 32:13, et.al.
9. Nevertheless they were disobedient... (v. 26)
  1. Take a look at Jere. 26:20-23; Mt. 23:37; Lk. 11:47.
10. ...and withdrew the shoulder... (v. 29)
  - A. Reference to the idea of “backsliding” – Hoses 4:16; Zech. 7:11.
11. ...by thy spirit... (v. 30)
  - A. Note 2 Peter 1:20, 21.
12. ...since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. (v. 32)
  - A. Assyria came against Israel as many as seven times – 2 Kings 15:19, 20; 15:29; 1 Chron. 5:26; 2 Kings 17:5; 18:13-16; 2 Chron. 33:11.
13. And because of this we make a sure *covenant*... (v. 38)
  - A. Because of their transgressions against God and His punishment of them.

## **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER TEN:**

(Subject: The People Make Vows of Faithfulness.)

Verses 1–27

1. Now those that sealed *were*... (v. 1)
  - A. There were basically two methods of sealing documents and such:
    1. The imprint of the thumbnail.
    2. A person’s private seal being impressed in clay, which was attached by a string to the document.
  - B. Here a list of those who signed the covenant, thus agreeing to it.

Verses 28–39

1. ...and entered into a curse... (v. 29)
  - A. There seems to be something similar to a ratification of the covenant by the people.
    1. Compare this to Deuteronomy 29:12.
2. ...seventh year... (v. 31)
  - A. This was the sabbath year in which all the land was to be left untilled.
    1. It seems that this commandment had been left unobeyed for some time – 2 Chron. 36:21.
  - B. The sabbath year was also referred to as the “year of release” – Deut. 15:9; 31:10.
    1. You can consider Ex. 23:10-12 concerning the regulations of the sabbath year.
3. ...the exaction of every debt. (v. 31)



- A. Go back to chapter 5:2-13.
- B. The practice of loaning money had begun again.
  - 1. Now they are pledging to no longer do such.
- 4. ...for the wood offering... (v. 34)
  - A. Not previously mentioned.
    - 1. This may have been due to the previous ease in obtaining firewood.
  - B. With the need for the wood for the perpetual fire, there was a new offering instituted – Lev. 6:12, 13.
- 5. the tithe of the tithes... (v. 38)
  - A. The Levites were to convey a tithe of that which was given to them.

### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER ELEVEN:**

(Subject: The Residents of Jerusalem and Other Cities are Listed.)

Verses 1

- 1. ...the rest of the people cast lots...
  - A. Jerusalem was still a hated city by those surrounding it.
    - 1. Therefore, they cast lots to see who would come and live there.
  - B. In a sense this was the remnant within a remnant, as you will recall not all had come back to the area.

Verse 2

- 1. ...the people blessed all the men...
  - A. In addition to those who were “drafted” into moving into the city there was also a group that volunteered to do so.

Verses 3-36

- 1. ...the chief of the province that dwell in Jerusalem... (v. 3)
  - A. Jews from the Persian capitals of Babylon and Susa.
- 2. ...the oversight of the outward business of the house of God. (v. 16)
  - A. Pertaining to the things done outside, or in the country, such as the collecting of the provisions for the people and for the temple service.
- 3. ...the principle to begin the thanksgiving in prayer... (v. 17)
  - A. Normally believed to be the leader of the singers who sang before prayer was offered.

### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER TWELVE:**

(Subject: Priests and Levites are Listed and the Wall is Dedicated.)

Verses 1-26

- 1. ...that went up with Zerubbabel... (v. 1)
  - A. Go back and look at Ezra 3:2.
    - 1. These are the priests and Levites who returned with Zerubbabel.
- 2. ...were written in the book of the chronicles... (v. 23)
  - A. Not the book of Chronicles.
    - 1. Rather, the public registers in which the genealogies were kept and protected.
- 3. ...ward over against ward. (v. 24)
  - A. A listing of the antiphonal singers.

4. ...keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates. (v. 25)
  - A. Literally, storerooms at the gates.
    1. Scholars believe that these storerooms were used as treasuries.

Verses 27-47

1. ...at the dedication of the wall... (v. 27)
  - A. The wall was finished and now it was time to dedicate it.
  - B. The word “dedication” here means to be holy; to sanctify; to consecrate – 2 Chron. 7:9; Dan. 3:2, 3.
2. ...villages of Netophathi... (v. 28)
  - A. People of Hatophah, a city not far from Bethlehem – 1 Chron. 9:16.
3. ...and the priests... (v. 30)
  - A. Note the order:
    1. Priests.
    2. Levites.
    3. People.
    4. Gates.
    5. Walls.
4. ...purified... (v. 30)
  - A. Literally, to become clean or pure.
    1. There are three types of purity:
      - A. Ceremonial.
      - B. Moral.
      - C. Physical.
5. ...so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off. (v. 43)
  - A. Take a look at Ezra 3:13 along with 1 Kings 1:40; 2 Kings 11:13.

### **NEHEMIAH CHAPTER THIRTEEN:**

(Subject: Foreigners Expelled and Religious Reforms Instituted to Purify the Nation.)

Verse 1

1. ...book of Moses...
  - A. The Pentateuch.
2. ...that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation...
  - A. Deuteronomy 23:3-5.

Verse 2

1. Because they met not the children of Israel...
  - A. Here is the reason as to why they were not allowed to come into the congregation.
2. ...but hired Balaam against them...
  - A. This is in reference to the turning of Balaam’s curse into a blessing – Num. 24:10.

Verse 3

1. ...they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.
  - A. The foreigners were expelled as per the Law.

Verse 4

1. ...Eliashib...
  - A. An ancestor of John the Baptist – Lk. 1:5.

2. ...chamber of the house...
  - A. Reference to the numerous chambers of chapter 12:44; 13:9, 12, 13.
3. ...allied unto Tobiah:
  - A. By virtue of the marriage of being married to Tobiah's daughter – vrs. 28, 29.

Verses 5-9

1. But in all this *time* was not I at Jerusalem... (v. 6)
  - A. Nehemiah had returned to Persia.
2. ...and they cleansed the chambers... (v. 9)
  - A. Basically, a reconsecration of the chamber as it had been polluted.

Verse 10

1. ...were fled every one to his field.
  - A. Perhaps the people had become disgusted with the actions of Eliashib and withheld the tithes.
    1. Because of this the Levites and singers had not received their support and, therefore, returned to their homes to make a living out of the earth.

Verses 11-14

1. ...and set them in their place. (v. 11)
  - A. Nehemiah returned the temple servants and restored them to their place of service.

Verses 15-22

1. ...and I testified *against them* in the day wherein they sold victuals. (v. 15)
  - A. The stopping of the temple services had been followed by a public profaning of the Sabbath by conducting work and business by the people.
    1. Because of their deeds Nehemiah testified against them in respect to their breaking the Sabbath by selling provisions.
2. Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us... (v. 18)
  - A. Nehemiah reminds them why they were in the predicament they were in.
    1. Jeremiah denounced the sin of the desecration of the Sabbath – Jere. 17:21-27.
    2. Likewise, so had Ezekiel – Ezek. 20:13; 22:8, 26.
  - B. The burning of the city was part of the punishment that He brought upon them for having done this in the past – Jere. 17:27.
    1. It seems that some people never learn.
3. ...yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. (v. 18)
  - A. Literally, additional wrath.
    1. Note the ASV where it states "more wrath."
    2. Also the NKJV where it states "added wrath."
4. ...when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut... (v. 19)
  - A. Due to this, and as a preventative measure, Nehemiah ordered the city gates to be shut, and not to be opened, till the Sabbath was past.
    1. He also set some of his own personal servants to act as guards to prevent anyone coming in with the intent of conducting business.
5. ...and *that* they should come *and* keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day... (v. 22)
  - A. Only the Levites were allowed to work on the Sabbath since what they did was of a religious service.

Verses 23-31

1. ...that married wives of Ashdod... (v. 23)
  - A. Here we go again!
    1. These were Philistine women.
      - A. They had always been hostile to Israel.
      - B. They had also taken part with Nehemiah's enemies – Neh. 4:7.
2. And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod... (v. 24)
  - A. The children, due to being around the mothers more, spake the mongrel dialect of their mothers and developed the foreign principles and habits of their mothers.
    1. Go back and give some more thought to Ezra chapters nine and ten.
3. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?... (v. 26)
  - A. With all of the knowledge that Solomon had, he still involved himself in the taking of concubines and wives from the heathen nations around him – 1 Kings 11:1-40.
4. ...strange wives... (v. 27)
  - A. Pagan wives.
5. ...therefore I chased him from me. (v. 28)
  - A. There are two ways to avoid evil or sin:
    1. Chase it away.
    2. Or flee from it:
      - A. 1 Corinthians 6:18 – “flee fornication.”
      - B. 1 Corinthians 10:14 – “flee from idolatry.”
      - C. 1 Timothy 6:9-11 – “flee these things.”
      - D. 2 Timothy 2:22 – “flee youthful lusts.”
  - B. God has promised a way of escape from temptation – 1 Cor. 10:13.
    1. But one must use that way.
6. Remember them... (v. 29)
  - A. As if God would forget.

## **ESTHER BACKGROUND NOTES**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. The book of Esther is located in the third division of the Hebrew canon called the Sacred Writings.
  - A. It is grouped with the Five Scrolls that are read by the Jews at their annual feasts:
    1. These scrolls are:
      - A. Song of Songs - read at the Passover.
      - B. Ruth - read at Pentecost.
      - C. Ecclesiastes - read at the Feast of Tabernacles.
      - D. Lamentations - read at a ceremony on the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple.
      - E. Esther - read at Purim.
        1. The Feast of Purim originated during this time and is still observed by the Jews.
        2. The name Purim comes from the Persian word "Puru" which means "lot."
        3. While being read at Purim, the audience responds with appropriate expressions of approval or disapproval at the book's high and low points.
        4. Purim is not listed as one of the commanded Feasts in Leviticus 23.
          - A. This, of course, is due to it having been instituted much later.
  2. In the English Bible the Book of Esther is located after Ezra and Nehemiah because it shares a common Persian background with them.
  3. The book is named for Esther, a Jewish orphan girl, who became the Queen of Persia.
    - A. The name Esther is a Persian word that means, "star," while her Hebrew name is Hadassah, which means "Myrtle."
    - B. Esther's popularity among present day Jews is evidenced by the numerous Jewish women's societies that are named Hadassah.
  4. The events of the book fall within the reign of King Ahasuerus about 486-465 B.C.
    - A. This would place it in the interval between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra.
    - B. The events take place totally in Gentile territory.

### **BACKGROUND:**

1. When Cyrus permitted the Jews in exile to return to their homeland many of them stayed in their new homes in exile.
  - A. Mordecai and Esther were among the thousands who remained in the territory of the Persians away from the land of Palestine.
  - B. This book demonstrates God's presence with those people as well as with the returnees to Judah.
2. Herodotus, a non-biblical source, gives us additional information about King Ahasuerus' reign.
  - A. He is better known to history by his Greek name, Xerxes or Xerxes I, King of Persia.

- B. In the gap between his third and his seventh years he undertook a disastrous invasion of Greece - Esth. 1:3; 2:16.
- C. The feast in Esther 1:1-9 corresponds to the assembly called in his third year to explore the possibility of a campaign against the Greeks.
- 3. The following time frame can be given:
  - A. 486 B.C. - Ahasuerus comes to the throne of Persia.
  - B. 483 B.C. - the feast (war council) in his third year.
    - 1. Queen Vashti is deposed and the search for a new queen begins – Esth. 1:16.
  - C. 480 B.C. - the Greeks defeat Ahasuerus at Salamis.
    - 1. Esther marries the king upon his return in the seventh year of his reign.
  - D. 475 B.C. - Haman's plot against the Jews in the twelfth year of his rule - Esth 3:7.
  - E. 465 B.C. – Ahasuerus dies.
- 4. The writer of the book is unknown.
  - A. The writer is obviously a patriotic Jew whose background was in the Persian Empire rather than in Judah.
  - B. The Babylonian Talmud, in Baba Bathra 15a, attributes the book to the men of the Great Synagogue.
  - C. Josephus considered Mordecai the author - Antiquities of the Jews, Book XI, Chapter VI, Section 1, p. 237, Kregel Publications.

#### **THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER:**

- 1. The book gives the historical background of Purim.
  - A. Haman had plotted the annihilation of all the Jews in Persia – Esth. 3:1-6.
  - B. Superstitious as he was he "cast the lot" to select the best time for his evil deed – Esth. 3:7.
  - C. The lot fell on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the month Adar – Esth. 3:7.
  - D. Through Esther's intervention another decree was issued which allowed the Jews to defend themselves and to avenge themselves against their enemies – Esth. 8:11,12; 9:11-15.
    - 1. This was done on Adar 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.
  - E. Because of this deliverance the Jews were urged to keep Adar 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> as a memorial – Esth. 9:20-22.
  - F. Adar corresponds to our February/March and the Jews still celebrate Purim as a joyous time of gift giving and feasting.
- 2. The major purpose of the book is to show the providence of God in action.
  - A. It was no mere lucky set of circumstances, which prevented the destruction of the Jewish people in Esther's time.
  - B. Even in a distant land God's people are still in His hands – Esth. 4:14.
  - C. Providence may be defined as the foreseeing care and guardianship of God over His people.
  - D. The stories of Joseph and Esther are outstanding cases of divine providence.
  - E. The doctrine is clearly stated in Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 4:16; 2 Pet 2:9.

## **ESTHER OUTLINE:**

- |  |              |
|--|--------------|
| 1. The Feast of Ahasuerus.....                 | Ch 1.        |
| 2. Esther Becomes Queen.....                   | Ch 2.        |
| 3. Haman's Plot.....                           | Ch 3.        |
| 4. Mordecai Persuades Esther to Intervene..... | Ch 4.        |
| 5. Esther's Success.....                       | Ch 5-7.      |
| 6. The Downfall of Haman's Plot .....          | Ch 8:1-9:16. |
| 7. The Feast of Purim.....                     | Ch 9:17-32.  |
| 8. The Prominence of Mordecai.....             | Ch10.        |

## **CONTROVERSIAL NATURE OF ESTHER:**

1. The Book of Esther is highly controversial among Biblical Scholars today.
  - A. There are several reasons for this:
    1. God is never mentioned in the Hebrew version of the book.
      - A. Several reasons have been suggested for this:
        1. The Jewish people were displeasing to God and were in exile.
        2. It illustrates the hiddenness of God.
        3. Due to its Persian setting the Jews feared that His name would be desecrated in the telling of the story.
      - B. It is found in the Septuagint.
    2. Neither Jerusalem nor the temple is mentioned although the events take place after Cyrus' decree.
    3. The only textual link that the book has with the remainder of the O.T. is it involves the Jewish people.
    4. There is no occasion of worship found in the book.
      - A. Fasting is mentioned and usually it links with prayer.
      - B. However, prayer is not specifically mentioned.
    5. Not much historical data is available to confirm the character and events recorded in the Book.
      - A. Archaeologists have confirmed the description of the palace at Susa.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **ESTHER CHAPTER ONE:**

(Subject: The Feast of Ahasuerus.)

Verse 1

1. ...Ahasuerus...
  - A. The Ahasuerus mentioned here is Xerxes, the son of Darius Hystaspis, as we saw in Ezra 4:6.
  - B. Undoubtedly, the writer of Esther was acquainted with several by the name of Ahasuerus.
    1. He is distinguished from:
      - A. The Ahasuerus of Daniel, as king.
      - B. The Ahasuerus of Ezra, due to his dominion.
      - C. Cambyeses, as he never ruled over India.

- C. It appears that by the time of the writing of the Book of Esther, the rule of Ahasuerus is over, as he is dead.
- 2. ...from India even unto Ethiopia...
  - A. These would be areas of the Persian Empire over which he ruled.
    - 1. India would indicate the Hindu River as one boundary.
    - 2. Ethiopia (Cush) would be the other boundary.
- 3. ...over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:
  - A. Provinces were areas, which had their own governor.
    - 1. The Greek historian Herodotus (c. 485-425 B.C.), stated in his book **The Histories** (Book III, pp. 89-94), written 440 B.C., which was written about the war between the Persian Empire and smaller Greek city-states, that there were twenty tax districts.
    - A. There is no reason to conclude that the provinces mentioned here would be the same as the tax district.

#### Verse 2

- 1. ...Shushan the palace.
  - A. Literally, Susa, which was the ordinary seat of government of Persia.

#### Verse 3

- 1. In the third year...
  - A. 483 B.C.
- 2. ...the power of Persia...
  - A. It appears that all of the powerful people of the Medo-Persian Empire were present.

#### Verse 4

- 1. ...even an hundred and fourscore days.
  - A. A six-month feast.
  - B. It should not be concluded that all of the people mentioned were present at the same time, but that over the six-month period these people came.

#### Verses 5-9

- 1. ...seven days... (v. 5)
  - A. This smaller feast concludes the six-month feast.
- 2. And the drinking *was* according to the law... (v. 8)
  - A. Persian law, concerning such feasts, was that drinking was to be done in moderation and only according to the wishes of the host.
    - 1. Historians suggest that the Persians commonly drank to excess.
  - B. Here it seems that the consumption was not compulsory, and that those present could choose whether to drink or not.
    - 1. Take a look at the NKJV on this.
- 3. ...Vashti the queen... (v. 9)
  - A. The word Vashti means "beautiful woman."
    - 1. The Greeks know of one wife of Xerxes, Amestris, who was the daughter of Otanes, one of the seven conspirators against Xerxes.
    - 2. Therefore, if Ahasuerus is Xerxes, then Vashti is Amestris.
  - B. Since there would have been women present Vashti gives a party for them.



1. It would not have been custom under Persian customs for the men and women to eat together.
4. ...*in* the royal house... (v. 9)
  - A. Some conflict on this.
    1. Some suggest that this was the house wherein the king's harem resided.
    2. Others say it was a separate apartment for the Queen.

#### Verses 10-12

1. ...when the heart of the king was merry with wine... (v. 10)
  - A. Some historians claim that according to Persian law the king was compelled to intoxicate himself at the feast of Mithra, which was a yearly event.
    1. Mithra first appears as an Aryan sun god in Sanskrit and Persian literature circa 1400 B.C.
2. ...seven chamberlains... (v. 10)
  - A. Literally, seven eunuchs.
3. ...to shew the people and the princes her beauty... (v. 11)
  - A. Two possible views:
    1. She would present herself before the people without her veil, which would be a huge insult.
    2. She would present herself before the people totally nude, except for the crown.

#### Verses 13-22

1. ...the wise men... (v. 13)
  - A. These would be the astrologers and magi of which the king depended upon for advice.
2. ...the seven princes of Persia and Media... (v. 14)
  - A. Chief advisors.
    1. In Ezra 7:14 we see that the king had seven special counsellors.
3. What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law... (v. 15)
  - A. Regardless of how angry the king was, he placed the law first.
    1. This, of course, would be in reference to Persian law.
4. For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women... (v. 17)
  - A. Vashti had refused to comply with the wishes of the king, possibly, before the other women who were attending her feast.
    1. This led to the concern of how that message would spread over the empire.
5. ...let it be written... (v. 19)
  - A. The writing of the decree would prevent the king from changing it even if Vashti later found favor in his eyes.
6. ...all the wives shall give to their husbands honour... (v. 20)
  - A. Literally that the wives would be in subjection to their husbands.
    1. Wives have the same responsibility today – Eph. 5:22, 23; 1 Pet. 3:1.
      - A. Of course that subjection does not mean they must comply with the wishes of their husband if those wishes are contrary to that which is right.

## **ESTHER CHAPTER TWO:**

(Subject: Esther Becomes Queen.)

Verses 1-4

1. ...he remembered Vashti... (v. 1)
  - A. Perhaps favorably.
    1. He may even have been questioning the sentence given her.
2. ...Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king. (v. 2)
  - A. He is still looking for beauty.
  - B. It may have been thought before (chapter 1:19) that a replacement would have simply been chosen from the harem.
    1. However, this does not appear to be considered.
3. ...unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain... (v. 3)
  - A. This would be the king's eunuch.
4. ...and let their things for purification be given *them*. (v. 3)
  - A. It was necessary for the candidates to be pure.

Verses 5-11

1. ...Mordecai... (v. 5)
  - A. The history of the name Mordecai is that it came from either an Assyrian or Babylonian god.
    1. It could have been given to him with no understanding of the connection of the name to heathen deities.
2. Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity... (v. 6)
  - A. If Mordecai were the one under consideration here, then he would be approximately 120-130 years of age as the captivity spoken of here was in the year 597 B.C.
    1. It seems best to me to see this in reference to Kish, who was the great-grandfather of Mordecai.
  - B. Commentators are about equally divided on this.
3. ...for she had neither father or mother... (v. 7)
  - A. Esther was an orphan.
4. ...to the custody of Hegai... (v. 8)
  - A. The Hege of verse 3.
5. Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred... (v. 10)
  - A. Had she of mentioned that she was of Jewish descent it would have probably prevented her from being considered.
    1. This came from the direction of Mordecai.
  - A. Undoubtedly, we see the providential hand of God in all of this.

Verses 12-20

1. ...for so were the days of their purifications accomplished... (v. 12)
  - A. This period of purification was according to Persian law and took at least a year to accomplish.
2. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned... (v. 14)
  - A. It is difficult to determine what this indicates.
    1. It appears that the king would not have treated her in the normal fashion since

- it appeared that he took delight in her.
3. ...she returned into the second house... (v. 14)
    - A. It appears that this house was divided into three sections or houses:
      1. A place of residence for the queen.
      2. A place of residence of secondary wives or concubines.
      3. A place of residence for the virgins.
    - B. Once the women returned from before the king they became residents of the second house.
  4. ...the tenth month, which *is* the month Tebeth... (v. 16)
    - A. The only mention of this month in the Scriptures.
      1. Corresponds with our months December/January.
  5. ...more than all the virgins... (v. 17)
    - A. From this it appears that she remained a virgin to this point.

#### Verses 21-23

1. ...and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name. (v. 22)
  - A. Literally, Esther warned the king in Mordecai's name.
    1. See the ASV or NKJV.
2. ...book of the chronicles before the king. (v. 23)
  - A. This was a record of events that happened concerning the king.

### **ESTHER CHAPTER THREE:**

(Subject: Haman's Plot.)

#### Verses 1-6

1. After these things... (v. 1)
  - A. Probably around the year 476 or 475 B.C.
2. ...the Agagite... (v. 1)
  - A. Probably reference to the location of his birth, although nothing is known of this place.

#### Verses 7-15

1. ...they cast Pur...(v. 7)
  - A. Resorting to astrology was very common among the Persian people.
    1. Major decisions were never made without doing so.
2. ...from day to day, and from month to month... (v. 7)
  - A. The date was finally determined to be in the twelfth month although the exact day is not given at this time.
3. ...that *is*, the month Adar. (v. 7)
  - A. Corresponding with our February/March.
4. ...a certain people... (v. 8)
  - A. The Jews are not mentioned by name.
5. ...neither keep they the king's laws... (8)
  - A. Probably few occasions of such other than the refusal of Mordecai to bow before Haman.
6. ...and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver... (v. 9)
  - A. The equivalent here would be millions.

1. The Persian treasury was probably in need of funds due to the war efforts put forth by Persia.
7. ...to the hands of those that have the charge of the business... (v. 9)
  - A. I.e. the business of receiving money into the treasury.
8. ...The silver *is* given to thee... (v. 11)
  - A. Not returning the money given by Haman, but a statement to the fact that whatever was spoil was his.
    1. It seems that Haman was counting on this reaction for the funds to pay into the treasury.
9. ...*even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month... (v. 13)
  - A. All Jews were to be put to death and their property confiscated.
    1. From these items is where Haman hoped to get the funds to pay into the treasury as promised.
  - B. Today, the Jews celebrate the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> as the dates for the Feast of Purim.
    1. Some scholars believe that the date change was done to assimilate the Purim to the Feast of the Passover, which began on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.
      - A. However, it appears as if these dates were determined shortly after the time that the Jews overcame – Est. 9:20, 21.
10. ...but the city of Shushan was perplexed. (v. 15)
  - A. There was much confusion in the city, as the Jews had not caused any problems.

#### **ESTHER CHAPTER FOUR:**

(Subject: Mordecai Persuades Esther to Intervene.)

Verses 1-17

1. ...none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. (v. 2)
  - A. Sorrowful issues or evil matter were not to be brought directly before the king.
2. ...she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth... (v. 4)
  - A. The purpose of this was so that he could enter the city and she could learn more from him concerning the matter.
3. ...*there is* one law of his... (v. 11)
  - A. This law was for all, high and low, great or small.
  - B. This law was first enacted by Deioces, king of Media, and afterwards was adopted by the Persians.
    1. The basic premise was that all matters that needed the king's attention were to be transmitted to him through his ministers.
4. ...except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden scepter... (v. 11)
  - A. Custom not mentioned by any other writer.
    1. Yet it seems customary according to all sculptures that are from that time period.
5. ...but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days. (v. 11)
  - A. It seems that she felt that the king did not want to see her since he had not called for her for thirty days.
6. ...Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape... (v. 13)
  - A. See the NKJV on this.

1. It seems that Mordecai was trying to open the eyes of Esther.
  - A. His point was clear.
    1. If you go see the king you may die.
    2. On the other hand, if you don't go you will die.
7. ...and fast ye for me... (v. 16)
  - A. This fast was a severe one.
    1. There was to be no consumption of food or drink.
8. ...and if I perish, I perish. (v. 16)
  - A. How I wish we in the church would be like Esther.
    1. Think about the reasons we do not do mission work.
  - B. Isn't it past time for us to get about the work of God?
    1. And if we perish, we perish.

## **ESTHER CHAPTER FIVE:**

(Subject: Esther's Success.)

Verses 1-14

1. ...touched the top of the scepter. (v. 2)
  - A. Some commentators suggest a kiss.
    1. Whether it was or wasn't, is beside the point and not knowable.
  - B. Which ever it was it clearly was an expression of reverence and submission.
2. ...banquet of wine... (v. 6)
  - A. A joyous banquet held after the time of eating as the king would have eaten alone.
3. ...let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them... (v. 8)
  - A. As to why Esther delays her request for another day we may never know.
    1. It could be that she felt that he would answer negatively, due to the Persian custom that once a decree was made it was irrevocable.
4. Then went Haman forth that day joyful...he was full of indignation... (v. 9)
  - A. Someone has said, "It is a short step from the peaks of joy to the depths of depression."
    1. Clearly Haman experienced both.
5. And Haman told them... (v. 11)
  - A. Haman is on an ego trip, but "*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.*" – Prov. 16:18.
6. ...Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high... (v. 14)
  - A. Hanging was not the Persian means of capital punishment.
    1. Therefore, some commentators have said that crucifixion was in mind.
      - A. The footnote in the ASV says, "tree."
  - B. Some have said that the height seems incorrect.
    1. However, if Haman wanted all to see what he had done to Mordecai then a cross that high would clearly get the job done.

## **ESTHER CHAPTER SIX:**

(Subject: Esther's Success Continued.)

Verses 1-14

1. And it was found written, that Mordecai... (v. 1)
  - A. Clearly a manifestation of the providence of God.
    1. Stop and think about it.
      - A. Why this section of the chronicles?
        1. Blind luck?
2. ...they read before the king. (v. 1)
  - A. Could be that the king could not read.
  - B. Perhaps the hearing of a soothing voice might induce sleep.
3. ...Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai... (v. 4)
  - A. You talk about bad timing in so far as Haman is concerned!
4. ...and the crown royal which is set upon his head: (v. 8)
  - A. Probably in reference to some sort of a "crown" worn by the king's horse to distinguish it from others.
    1. It would not seem logical that the king would agree for someone else to wear the crown of the king.
      - A. See the NKJV on this.
5. ...and do even so to Mordecai the Jew... (v. 10)
  - A. The king probably learned of the religion of Mordecai from the previous night's reading.
  - B. Can you imagine how Haman felt?
6. ...If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail... (v. 13)
  - A. Haman is told that he will surely fail.

## **ESTHER CHAPTER SEVEN:**

(Subject: Esther's Success Continued.)

Verses 1-10

1. ...although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage. (v. 4)
  - A. Literally, the enemy could not compensate for the king's loss.
    1. In other words, since they were not being sold into slavery but, rather, killed Haman could not pay into the Persian treasury enough to compensate for such a loss.
      - A. Remember the deal he had made?
2. ...and Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther *was*... (v. 8)
  - A. As was customary Esther was reclining on her bed or couch.
    1. Haman cast himself forward onto the couch in an effort to grasp either her feet or garment, which was customary with those who were pleading for something.
3. ...As the word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. (v. 8)
  - A. This indicated the beginning of the carrying out of the sentence.

## **ESTHER CHAPTER EIGHT:**

(Subject: The Downfall of Haman's Plot – Chapter 8:1-9:16)

Verses 1-17

Verse 1

1. And the king took off his ring...and gave it unto Mordecai... (v. 2)
  - A. Haman's position and the ring previously given to him are now presented unto Mordecai.
2. ...let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman... (v. 5)
  - A. It would not be possible for Esther to ask the king to revise what he had said or done.
    1. However, she represented the letters as having been devised and written by Haman.
      - A. This, of course, was within the concept of what Haman had done – Esther 3:12.
3. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name... (v. 8)
  - A. Ahasuerus could not undo what he had previously done.
    1. He expressed the fact that he did do what he could:
      - A. He had given Haman's house to Esther.
      - B. He had Haman killed.
    2. But he could not revoke the decree previously given.
  - B. So Mordecai is instructed by the king to write in whatever way he could that which would free the Jews from the decree.
4. ...and seal *it* with the king's ring... (v. 8)
  - A. From this we see that it is evident that the royal ring had a seal in it.
    1. And when it was affixed to any document it authenticated it with the stamp of royal authority.
5. ...may no man reverse. (v. 8)
  - A. Perhaps this was as much said to explain why he could not reverse the previous decree as for the present matter of a new decree.
6. ...the month Sivan... (v. 9)
  - A. Corresponds with our months May/June.
7. ...young dromedaries. (v. 10)
  - A. Probably reference to young horses that had been bred for speed.
    1. See the NKJV on this.
8. Wherein the king granted the Jews...(v. 11)
  - A. Due to the nature of the previous decree being irrevocable, a contradictory decree is issued which gives the Jewish people the right to defend themselves even to the point of the taking of the lives of those who may attack them.
9. ...And many of the people of the land became Jews... (v. 17)
  - A. Became proselytes.

### **ESTHER CHAPTER NINE:**

(Subject: The Feast of Purim – Chapter 9:17-32.)

Verses 1-32

1. ...for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater. (v. 4)  
A. Again, another manifestation of the providence of God.
2. ...but on the spoil laid they not their hand. (v. 10)  
A. Customarily they would have done so.
  1. But this was a different set of circumstances.
3. ...and they hanged Haman's ten sons. (v. 14)  
A. This was done in order to publicly brand them and their malice and hatred toward the Jews.
4. ...and made it a day of feasting and gladness. (v. 17)  
A. Origin of the Feast of Purim.
5. ...and it was written in the book. (v. 32)  
A. I.e. the book of the chronicles of Persia.

### **ESTHER CHAPTER TEN:**

(Subject: The Prominence of Mordecai.)

Verses 1-3

1. ...laid tribute upon the land... (v. 1)  
A. I.e. a new tax.
2. ...the isles of the sea. (v. 1)  
A. Certain areas along the coast of Europe.
3. ...and speaking peace to all his seed. (v. 3)  
A. What a way to close the book!



## **ADDITIONAL NOTES MONTHS OF THE JEWISH YEAR:**

The "first month" of the Jewish calendar is the month of Nisan, in the spring, when Passover occurs. However, the Jewish New Year is in Tishri, the seventh month, and that is when the year number is increased. This concept of different starting points for a year is not as strange as it might seem at first glance. The American "new year" starts in January, but the new "school year" starts in September, and many businesses have "fiscal years" that start at various times of the year. Similarly, the Jewish calendar has different starting points for different purposes.

The names of the months of the Jewish calendar were adopted during the time of Ezra, after the return from the Babylonian exile. The names are actually Babylonian month names, brought back to Israel by the returning exiles. Note that most of the Bible refers to months by number, not by name.

The Jewish calendar is based on both solar and lunar years. The average lunar year of 354 days is adjusted to the solar year by the addition of a leap year and an intercalary month.

The Jewish calendar has the following months:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Gregorian Equivalent</b>
Nisan/Nissan	1	30 days	March-April
Iyar	2	29 days	April-May
Sivan	3	30 days	May-June
Tammuz	4	29 days	June-July
Av	5	30 days	July-August
Elul	6	29 days	August-September
Tishri	7	30 days	September-October
Cheshvan	8	29 or 30 days	October-November
Kislev	9	30 or 29 days	November-December
Tevet	10	29 days	December-January
Shevat	11	30 days	January-February
Adar	12	29 or 30 days	February-March
Adar II	13	29 days	March-April

In leap years, Adar has 30 days. In non-leap years, Adar has 29 days.

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES ON JEWISH FEASTS:**

<i><b>Feast of</b></i>	<i><b>Month on Jewish Calendar</b></i>	<i><b>Day</b></i>	<i><b>Corresponding Month</b></i>	<i><b>References</b></i>
Passover *	Nisan	14	March-April	Ex. 12:1-14; Mt. 26:17-20
Unleavened Bread *	Nisan	15-21	March-April	Ex. 12:15-20
Firstfruits	Nisan or Sivan	16 6	March-April May-June	Lev. 23:9-14 Num. 28:26
Pentecost *	Sivan	6 **	May-June	Deut. 16:9-12; Acts 2:1
Trumpets ***	Tishri	1, 2	September-October	Num. 29:1-6
Day of Atonement *****	Tishri	10	September-October	Lev. 23:26-32; Heb. 9:7
Tabernacles * (Booths or Ingathering)	Tishri	15-22	September-October	Neh. 8:13-18; John 7:2
Dedication	Kislev	25	November-December	John 10:22
Purim (Lots)	Adar	14, 15	February-March	Est. 9:18-32

\* The three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem – Ex. 23:14-19. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are so closely connected that they are often considered to be one, yet they are distinct.

\*\* Fifty days after barley harvest.

\*\*\* Rosh Hashanah.

\*\*\*\*\* Yom Kippur.

Adapted from Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON ESDRAS:

(Ἑζδρας) (**KEY**) [Gr. from Heb. Ezra], name of several books found in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The New Revised Standard Version (following the Authorized Version) maintains the titles Ezra and Nehemiah for the books to which the Vulgate gives the titles First and Second Esdras respectively. The Septuagint gives the title Second Esdras to a work in which both books are combined. In the Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah are also a combined work. The New Revised Standard Version's and Septuagint's First Esdras compile the whole of Ezra, sections of Second Chronicles and Nehemiah, and a story about Darius the Persian's bodyguards. In the Vulgate this work is entitled Third Esdras. The work known as Second Esdras in the Apocrypha of the Authorized Version and New Revised Standard Version is given the title Fourth Esdras (=Fourth Ezra) in the Vulgate. Part of this work is a Jewish apocalypse extant in Latin; other parts are Christian additions. Many consider it the most theologically perceptive of the Jewish apocalypses. The original language was probably Hebrew or Aramaic, from which a Greek translation was made; however, none of these versions exist. The work, which most critics date after A.D. 100, is a response to the destruction (A.D. 70) of Jerusalem. See Apocrypha; J. M. Myers, *I and II Esdras* (1974); J. H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Vol. I, 1983); M. Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (1990).

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## WHAT IS THE APOCRYPHA?

Apocrypha means 'hidden things' in Greek. The first set are books which are included in some version of the canonical Bible, but which have been excluded at one time or another, for textual or doctrinal issues. These are called 'Deuterocanonical', which means 'books added to the canon.'

The second set is other apocryphal texts which have not been canonized, but which nevertheless shed light on the Bible and its history.

The term "apocrypha" was coined by the fifth-century biblical scholar St. Jerome and refers to the biblical books included as part of the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament), but not included in the Hebrew Bible.

Several works ranging from the fourth century B.C.E. to New Testament times are considered apocryphal--including Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, Tobit, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, First and Second Maccabees, the two Books of Esdras, various additions to the Book of Esther (10:4-10), the Book of Daniel (3:24-90;13;14), and the

## Prayer of Manasseh

The apocrypha have been variously included and omitted from bibles over the course of the centuries. Protestant churches generally exclude the apocrypha (though the King James version of 1611 included them). The Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches include all of the apocrypha (except for the books of Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh), but refer to them as "deuterocanonical" books. In this context, the term "apocrypha" generally refers to writings entirely outside of the biblical canon and not considered inspired (such as the Gospel of Thomas). These same books are referred to by Protestants as the "pseudepigrapha."

### **LIST OF OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHAL BOOKS:**

1. 1 Esdras
2. 1 Maccabees
3. 2 Esdras (a.k.a 4 Ezra)
4. 2 Maccabees
5. 3 Maccabees
6. 4 Ezra (a.k.a. 2 Esdras)
7. 4 Maccabees
8. Baruch
9. Bel and the Dragon
10. Daniel and Susanna
11. Editions to Esther
12. Judith
13. Letter of Jeremiah
14. The Prayer of Azaria
15. The Prayer of Manasseh
16. Psalm 151
17. Sirach
18. Tobit
19. The Wisdom of Solomon

## WHAT IS THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHIA?

(ספרי'דפ'גרפ) (KEY) [Gr.,=things falsely ascribed], a collection of early Jewish and some Jewish-Christian writings composed between c.200 B.C. and c.A.D. 200, not found in the Bible or rabbinic writings. <sup>1</sup>

Apocalypses are well represented in the Pseudepigrapha; those of the early Judaic period may date from the 3d cent. B.C. The Testament, the genre of the farewell discourse, is also frequently encountered in the Pseudepigrapha. Prayers and hymns are found both independently (e.g. Psalms of Solomon, Odes of Solomon, Prayer of Manasseh), as well as incorporated into other genres. Most of the works are anonymous; only the apocalypses are strictly speaking pseudepigrapha. <sup>2</sup>

The Pseudepigrapha have been transmitted in Western, Eastern, Ethiopian, and Egyptian Coptic churches and are often extant only in the languages of those churches, i.e., Latin, Greek, Syriac, Georgian, Armenian, Coptic, and Ethiopic, though originally composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. Evidence of Christian interpolation and addition exists in some of these books. Some fragments of books included in the Pseudepigrapha have also been discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls. <sup>3</sup>

A large proportion of the Pseudepigrapha can be explained by reference to early Judaism's persistent readiness to interpret and expand biblical traditions, reapplying them to new situations and problems. Virtually all the theological themes of the Pseudepigrapha can be located in the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, the 2d cent. B.C. Jubilees is basically a retelling of Genesis and the Moses narratives of Exodus, with various added details not found in the Bible. One such example of expansion is the novellike Joseph and Asenath, in which speculation concerning the marriage of Joseph to Asenath reaches expression. Another example is the farewell exhortations by each of the twelve sons of Jacob to their families, which expand upon the Blessings of Jacob in the Book of Genesis. And finally, the Life of Adam and Eve (1st cent. A.D.) expands the concise narratives provided in the Bible, though the work stresses the guilt of Eve while asserting the comparative innocence of Adam. This predilection for applying and expanding scripture manifests in early Judaism that adaptability which is the hallmark of a living religion. In this regard the New Testament shares the same attitude as the Hebrew Bible, the writers taking biblical traditions, exegeting them, and reapplying them in light of their experience of Jesus. <sup>4</sup>

Future expectation plays a lesser role in the Pseudepigrapha than might be expected; although the apocalypses are interested in the future's determination, they more often stress the faithful standing strong while awaiting God's triumph. Messianic expectation is ambiguous; there is no agreed agenda and no universal expectation of a Messiah. Nevertheless, the expectation of two Messiahs—one of Aaron, who takes precedence, and one of David—are noted in the Pseudepigrapha. Psalms of Solomon 17 is one of the clearest statements before the life of Jesus concerning the coming Messiah. In the apocalyptic literature, as in the New Testament, the premise is that

God will intervene on the behalf of his beleaguered people, translating them to God's place after destroying their enemies. The doctrine of rewards and punishments in the afterlife is axiomatic for the apocalypses. The earlier Pseudepigrapha can be examined for anticipations of the New Testament coordinates shaping eschatological life. The collective Pseudepigraphic works remain substantively informative regarding the theologies, tendencies, and conditions of those that lived in the ancient Judaic and early Christian eras.

#### **LIST OF OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHACHAL BOOKS:**

1. 1 Enoch
2. 2 Enoch
3. 4 Baruch
4. The Books of Adam and Eve
5. Life of Adam and Eve
6. Adam and Eve
7. The Story of Ahikar
8. The Apocalypse of Abraham
9. The Apocalypse of Adam
10. The Apocalypse of Moses
11. Enoch
12. Joseph and Aseneth
13. The Book of Jubilees
14. Letter of Aristeas
15. The Martyrdom of Isaiah
16. *Paraleipomena Jeremiou* (a.k.a. 4 Baruch)
17. Pseudo-Phoclidides
18. The Revelation of Esdras
19. The Second Treatise of the Great Seth
20. Sibylline Oracles
21. The Testament of Abraham
22. Testament of Solomon
23. Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

Most of this information was taken from the following Web Site:

<http://www.pseudepigrapha.com>. You may want to check it out sometime for further information on similar lists of such books in the New Testament era.