

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### PERIOD NINE

#### RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY - EZRA, NEHEMIAH, ESTHER, 486 - 400 BC.

#### LESSON 36

*In this lesson we want to study the books of EZRA, NEHEMIAH AND ESTHER.*

#### EZRA

- *Who Ezra was*
- *Outline of his book*
- *The Jews went back to Israel*
  - *with Zerubbabel as leader*
  - *with Ezra as leader*
- *The temple was built*
- *The people confessed their sins*

#### NEHEMIAH

- *Who Nehemiah was*
- *The outline of his book*
- *The wall was built*
- *The people made an agreement with God*

#### ESTHER

- *Who Esther was*
- *The outline of her book*
- *How God protected the Jews*

550	559 to 530 - Cyrus		
538	538 to 525 Darius the Mede	536	Jews back to Palestine
525			
519	519 to 486 Darius I	520	Temple started again
500		516	Temple finished
486		483	Vashti not queen
475	485 to 465 -Xerxes (Ahasuerus)	478	Esther queen
	465 - 424 - Artaxerxes	464	Feast of Purim
450		457	Group to Judah
425		444	Nehemiah to Judah
422	422 to 402 Darius		
402			
400			

#### INTRODUCTION

There were three men called "Darius" who ruled Babylon. We know very little about the first Darius. Daniel is the only one who tells about him (Daniel 5:30 to 6:28). Daniel says this Darius was the one who captured Babylon. He is called Darius, the Mede. He ruled when Daniel was thrown into the lion's den.

We are not told when Cyrus, the Persian, took the place of Darius, the Mede, as ruler. Daniel tells that he did very well under the rule of Darius and Cyrus (Daniel 6:28). Cyrus, the Persian, was the king Isaiah told about (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

Soon after Cyrus began to rule Babylon, he sent a group of Jews back to Jerusalem. They were to rebuild the temple. Zerubbabel led the Jews back to Jerusalem. He was their governor or leader. Later Ezra became governor. After Ezra, Nehemiah was the governor. For awhile Ezra worked as a teacher of the Bible. Nehemiah was governor at that time.

The people of Israel are often called Jews in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther. Jew means "man of Judah."

Time	PERIOD NINE RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRY		
Main thought	THE KING OF PERSIA SENT THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL BACK TO THEIR COUNTRY		
Kings	559 - 530 BC - King Cyrus 521 - 486 BC - King Darius 485 - 465 BC - King Xerxes (Ahasuerus) - 478 BC - Esther		
Great men  Chapters that tell of each part	ZERUBBABEL 537 BC  Ezra 1 to 6	EZRA 458 BC  Ezra 7 to 10	NEHEMIAH 444 BC  Nehemiah 1 to 13
What this part tells about	Built the temple  Prince of the house of David  520 - Haggai Zechariah	Writer  Teacher  <b>PROPHETS</b>	Small Ruler (governor)  Rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem  443 - Malachi

JUDAH															
Babylon	Darius	Mede	Artaxerxes	Darius I				Xerxes (Ahasuerus)			Artaxerxes			Darius	
	Cyrus	Artaxerxes													
King	Zerubbabel							Ezra Nehemiah 430-420 Babylon							
Prophet				Zechariah											
Prophet				Haggai								Malachi			
BC	540	530	520	510	500	490	480	470	460	450	440	430	420	410	400
Prophet															
Prophet															
King	Israel in exile in Assyria														
ISRAEL															

**EZRA**

- **THE MAN EZRA**

Ezra spent much time studying the Word of God. He taught the Word of God to the people. The people listened to him and obeyed him.

- **THE BOOK EZRA**

PART 1

PART 2

Chapters 1 to 6

Chapters 7 to 10

Return to Jerusalem with the leader  
Zerubbabel

Return to Jerusalem with the leader  
Ezra

The books of Chronicles tell the story of the people of Judah before they went to Babylon. Ezra and the end of second Chronicles tell the story of the people of Judah going back to Jerusalem.

The book of Ezra is divided into two parts. Ezra chapters 1 to 6 tell how the temple was built again. Zerubbabel was the leader. This was about 539 BC (before Christ). The second part of Ezra, chapters 7 to 10 tell how Ezra taught the people. This was about 457 BC

## A. Outline of the book.

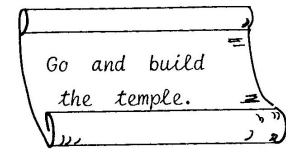
- A group of Jews return to Jerusalem, Ezra 1:1 - 2:70.
- The Jews settle in Jerusalem, Ezra 3:1 - 4:24.
- The Jews finished the temple, Ezra 5:1 - 6:22.
- Ezra went to Jerusalem, Ezra 7:1 - 8:36.
- The Jews turn to the Lord, Ezra 9:1 - 10:44.

## B. Lessons of the book.

- **Zerubbabel, the leader.**

- READ EZRA CHAPTER 1.

We do not know if Cyrus worshipped other gods. But we do know that he knew the Lord God. What did the Lord tell Cyrus to do (Ezra 1:2)?



This is what Isaiah said Cyrus would do (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

- READ EZRA CHAPTER 3.

When the Jews came to Jerusalem, they started to work. What was the first thing they built (Ezra 3:2,3)?

What was the first feast they had (Ezra 3:4)?

- READ EZRA CHAPTER 4.

The enemies of the Jews heard that the Jews were building the temple again. They were not happy. What did the enemies want to do (Ezra 4 1,2)?

Did Zerubbabel and Jeshua let these men help (Ezra 4:3)?

Why?

How did the enemies stop the work on the temple (Ezra 4:6)?

- READ EZRA CHAPTER 6.

After Artaxerxes died Darius I (not Darius, the Mede) became king. Some of the Jews wrote to Darius I. They asked him to find out if Cyrus had made a law to build the temple. Darius I found that Cyrus had made a law to build the temple. What did Darius I do then (Ezra 6:1; 6:6-12)?

- **Ezra, the leader.**

- READ EZRA CHAPTER 7.

Chapter 7 starts the second part of the book. It tells how Ezra went to Jerusalem. What did Ezra want to do in Jerusalem (Ezra 7:10)?

- READ EZRA 8:15-36.

What did Ezra and the people do before they left Babylon (Ezra 8:21-23)?

Did Ezra ask the king for help?

Why not?

- READ EZRA CHAPTER 9.

When Ezra came to Jerusalem, he learned that the people had sinned. What sin did they do (Ezra 9:1-2)?

What did Ezra do when he heard this (Ezra 9:3-6)?

What did the people do when they saw Ezra praying (Ezra 10:1-3)?

## **NEHEMIAH**

- **THE MAN NEHEMIAH**

The name Nehemiah means "consoled, comforted."

Nehemiah worked for King Artaxerxes at Shushan, a city in Persia. This is a different King Artaxerxes than the king who ruled when Zerubbabel went to Jerusalem. Nehemiah was the only man who gave the king his cup to drink from. He was called a cupbearer.

- **THE BOOK NEHEMIAH**

**A. Outline of the book.**

- Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem, Nehemiah 1:1 - 2:8.
- Nehemiah's first work in Jerusalem, Nehemiah 2:9 - 6:19.
- The Jews repented of their sin, Nehemiah 7:1 - 10:39.
- Nehemiah's work, Nehemiah 11:1 - 13:31.

**B. Lessons of the book.**

- **Nehemiah wanted to help the Jews.**

What did Nehemiah do when he heard how things were in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:4)?

READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 2.

What did Nehemiah do when the king asked him, "Why are you sad?" (Nehemiah 2:4,5)

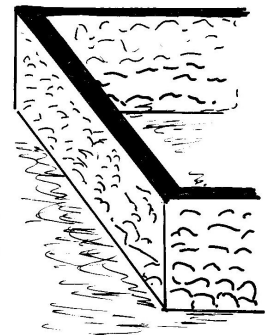
What did Nehemiah do when he came to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:12-16)?

- **Nehemiah built the wall.**

Nehemiah asked the people to build the wall of Jerusalem. Each family was given a part of the wall to build, Nehemiah chapter 3.

READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 4.

The enemies tried to stop the building of the wall. How were the Jews able to keep on working (Nehemiah 4:13,15-23)?



READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 6.

Sanballet, Tobiah and Geshem tried to stop the work on the wall. They thought that if they took Nehemiah, they could stop the work. What did they want Nehemiah to do (Nehemiah 6:2)?

What did Nehemiah tell them (Nehemiah 6:3,4)?

How long did it take the people to finish the wall (Nehemiah 6:15)?

- **The people repented.**

READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 8.

What did the people do when Ezra read the law to them (Nehemiah 8:9)?

What did Ezra and Nehemiah want the people to do (Nehemiah 8:10)?

- **The people made a covenant (agreement) with the Lord.**

READ NEHEMIAH 9:38 - 10:39.

What did the people promise the Lord in Nehemiah 9:38; 10:28,29?

What did the people promise not to do (Nehemiah 10:30)?

What were the people going to keep (Nehemiah 10:31)?

What were the people going to give to God's house each year (Nehemiah 10:32)?

What were the people going to bring to the temple (Nehemiah 10:35)?

What were the people going to give to the Lord (Nehemiah 10:36)?

What were the people not going to leave (Nehemiah 10:39)?

- **The people and the covenant (agreement).**

READ NEHEMIAH CHAPTER 13.

Nehemiah went back to Babylon for awhile (Nehemiah 13:6).

What did Eliashib, the priest, do while Nehemiah was away (Nehemiah 13:7)?

What did Nehemiah do when he found out about it (Nehemiah 13:8,9)?

Did the Jews keep the Sabbath like they said they would (Nehemiah 13:15,17)?

What did Nehemiah do to them (Nehemiah 13:19-21)?

What other sin were the people doing (Nehemiah 13:23)?

How did Nehemiah punish them for this (Nehemiah 13:25)?

## ESTHER

- **THE BOOK ESTHER**

### A. Introduction to the book.

The book of Esther is about a Jewish girl who was made queen of Persia. She was made queen when Ahasuerus (Xerxes) was king.

The book does not have the name "God" or "Lord" in it. Yet, the book shows how the Lord works in the lives of people. This book tells about the Jews who were still in Babylon.





## **B. Outline of the book.**

- The house of Ahasuerus, Esther 1:1 - 2:23.
  - King Ahasuerus got rid of Queen Vashti, Esther 1:1-22.
  - King Ahasuerus chose Esther to be queen, Esther 2:1-18.
  - Mordecai saved the life of King Ahasuerus, Esther 2:19-23.
- The Jews were in danger of death, Esther 3:1 - 5:14.
  - Haman tried to kill the Jews, Esther 3:1-15.
  - Mordecai told Esther of the danger, Esther 4:1-17.
  - Esther put her life in danger, Esther 5:1-14.
- The lives of the Jews were saved, Esther 6:1 - 10:3.
  - Mordecai was honored for saving the king's life, Esther 6:1-11.
  - Haman was hanged, Esther 6:12 - 7:10.
  - Mordecai was given Haman's place of work, Esther 8:1-17.
  - The Jews were able to defend themselves, Esther 9:1-32.
  - Mordecai worked for the king, Esther 10:1-3.

## **C. Lessons of the book.**

READ THE BOOK OF ESTHER.

The book of Esther shows how the Lord can work in the lives of different people. He takes care of His people.

Haman was proud. Mordecai would not bow down to Haman. This made Haman very angry. Because of Mordecai, he wanted to kill all the Jews. Haman tricked the king into making a law. This law said, "All the Jews must be killed on a certain day."

God let Esther live in the king's house at this time. The king loved her. He listened to her. Esther told the king that her life and the lives of the Jews were in danger of death. She told the king it was Haman's fault. The king hanged Haman.

Mordecai had a new law made. This law let the Jews defend themselves on the "day that the Jews were to die".

## **IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER**

The books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther show God's love for the people of Israel. Even though the Lord had to punish the people of Israel for their sin, the Lord took care of them. The Lord did not destroy all the people of Israel. He kept His promise to them. The Lord brought the people of Israel back to their own country.

## **WORDS TO LEARN**

1. capture - to take as in battle.
2. defend - to protect yourself and your things from your enemies and from thieves.
3. governor - leader of a province or country.

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