

Restoration and Renewal

Introduction To Ezra & Nehemiah



Avoiding the fate of the Wawona Tree
1 Corinthians 10:5-12

Why Study Ezra & Nehemiah?
Ezra-Nehemiah is the last of the historical books in the Old Testament and are comparable to the New Testament book of Acts. This was one of the most challenging times for Israel and set in motion the coming of the Messiah about 400 years later.

Following is a summary of the history of the period that is covered by Ezra-Nehemiah [E-N]:

A. The Fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 586 BC

1. Nebuchadnezzar sacks Jerusalem in 586 BC *2 Kings 24:10-20*
2. The Prophet Ezekiel began his ministry in this period as did Jeremiah.
3. This was the key event that sets the stage for Ezra-Nehemiah
4. The fall of Jerusalem was 140 years before E-N.

B. The rise of Belshazzar as the last ruler of Babylon

1. Belshazzar replaces Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 5, 7, and 8

C. The fall of Babylon to Cyrus, the King of Persia 539 BC

1. In the first year of Cyrus' reign he issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple. (See **Isaiah 44:28** *2 Chron 36:22-23* and *Ezra 1-6*) [This fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy Jer 29:10]
2. However because of Samaritan opposition it was another 15 years before the work was done.

D. The reign of Darius the Mede 522 BC (*Persian*)

1. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah are active during this time period and the temple is completed around 515 BC.
2. It was during this time that an attempt was also made to restore the walls of the city but that was stopped by surrounding foes. *Neh 1:3*

E. The reign of Xerxes (*Persian*)

1. Also known as Ahasuerus took the throne in 486 BC
2. This is the man who chose Esther to be his queen

F. The reign of Artaxerxes I 465-424 (*Persian*)

G. The arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem

1. This was during the 7th year of the reign of Artaxerxes

H. The arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem

1. The decree to rebuild: In the 20th year of Artaxerxes 445 BC *Neh 2:1*; see **Dan 9:25-26** The coming of the Messiah
2. During his time in Jerusalem, which lasted more than 12 years and involved at least two trips to Judea from Persia, Nehemiah:
 - a. Rebuilt the walls of the city
 - b. Instituted lasting religious and moral reforms

Why the Destruction?

2 Chron 7:12-22 (950 BC)

2Ch 7:21 "And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and this house?'

Key Passages

2 Chronicles 36:22-23

:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

:23 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May the LORD his God *be* with him, and let him go up!

Ezra 1:1-3

:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also *put it* in writing, saying,

:2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which *is* in Judah.

:3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He *is* God), which *is* in Jerusalem.