

# WEEK 10 | EZRA & NEHEMIAH

## EZRA & NEHEMIAH

The books of 1 & 2 Kings end with Israel and Judah in exile, suffering the full weight of the covenant curses for the unfaithfulness to Yahweh. The great tension at the end of these books is: what will happen to Israel? Is God done with them? The resounding answer is no. God is not done with His people, because God will not violate His own word and promises to them.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied of a day when Yahweh would “fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares Yahweh, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jer 29:10-11). The books of Ezra and Nehemiah narrate the fulfillment of that prophecy. Taking place approximately 70 years after the events of 2 Kings, these books open with the decree of Cyrus: Jerusalem and the temple will be rebuilt, and Israel will return from exile.

The narrative covers the next hundred years as waves of exiles return to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild their capital city, beginning with the temple. Of important interest in both Ezra and Nehemiah is whether or not this new generation of Israelites will be any different than their forefathers. Will they obey Yahweh? Will they give Him the exclusive worship and service He is due? At the end of Old Testament history, these questions and tension remain and prepare us for the New Testament.

### Historical Context

Daniel	Ezra / Nehemiah				Chronicles
	Persia				Israel
Babylon					Babylon
Persia	Cyrus				Persia (under Cyrus)
Greece	Darius				
Rome	Ahasuerus				
God's Kingdom	Artaxerxes	Artaxerxes	Artaxerxes	Artaxerxes	
	E/1 - E/6	E/7 - E/10	N/1 - N/13:3	N/13:4	
	538-515 BC	458-457 BC	446-433 BC	430?-425 BC	

## STRUCTURE

### Ezra

- I. Return from Exile (1-2)
- II. Rebuilding of Cultus and Community (3-6)
- III. Return of Ezra (7-8)
- IV. Ministry of Ezra (9-10)

### Nehemiah

- V. Nehemiah's Dilemma (1)
- VI. Nehemiah's Plan (2)
- VII. Nehemiah's Building (3-4)
- VIII. Nehemiah's Reforms (5)
- IX. Nehemiah's Determination (6:1-7:4)
- X. List of Returnees (7:5-73)
- XI. Covenant Renewal (7:73b-10:39)
- XII. Rededication of Jerusalem (11:1-13:3)
- XIII. Recapitulation and Reform (13:4-31)

### Literary Chart

The Return Under Sheshbazzar / Zerubbabel	The Return Under Ezra	The Return Under Nehemiah	The Renewed Community of Israel	The Failure of the People
Jeremiah 1:1		Moses 1:8	<b>Teaching</b> 8:1-10:39	Remember Me 13:14,22,31
Support 1:4	Request 7:6	Request 2:4	Repopulation of Jerusalem 11:1-12:26	
Tyrrians 3:7	King 7:6,12	King 2:1ff	<b>Dedication of the Wall</b> 12:27-43	
<b>Temple</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Wall Builder</b>	<b>Temple Service</b> 12:44-13:3	
E/1 - E/6	E/7 - E/10	N/1 - N/7:73	N/8:1 - N/13:3	N/13:4 - 13:31
538 - 515 BC	458(7) - 457(6)	446(5) - 445(4)	445(4) - 433(2)	ca. 430-423 BC

## PURPOSE

Yahweh continues to demonstrate unwavering faithfulness to the Abrahamic Covenant in the restoration of Israel. In the return from exile, He gives Israel another chance to demonstrate faithfulness to Him by keeping the Mosaic Covenant, especially through the rebuilding of the tabernacle and reinstatement of the sacrificial system.

## THEMES

### 1) God

- a. The “God of Heaven” (E, 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23; N, 1:4, 5; 2:4, 20; cf. Dan. 2:18, 19, 37, 44)
- b. The Sovereign God (E, 1, 6, 7, 8; N, 2, 4, 6, 7, 13)
  - i. “The hand of God” (E, 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; N 2:8, 18)
  - ii. “The Lord stirred the spirit (E, 1:1, 5)
  - iii. “The eye of God” (E, 5:5)
  - iv. “The Lord turned the heart” (E, 6:22)
  - v. “God frustrated” (N, 4:15)
  - vi. “From our God” (N, 6:16)
  - vii. “God put into my heart” (N, 7:5)
  - viii. “Remember me” (N, 13:14, 22, 31)
- 2) Prayer (E, 8:23; 9:5-15; 10:1, 11; N, 1:4-11; 2:4; 4:4-5, 9; 5:13, 19; 6:9, 14; 9:5-38; 13:14, 22, 29, 31)
- 3) The Temple/House of God (E, 1-10; N, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)
- 4) The Law (E, 3, 7, 10; N, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13)
- 5) Levites (E, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; N, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)
- 6) The Sin of the People (E, 9, 10; N, 1, 5, 13)
- 7) The Confession of the People (E, 10; N, 9)

## TIMELINE OF EZRA & NEHEMIAH

### Events in Ezra & Nehemiah

Year	Event(s)	Reference
538 BC	The Decree of Cyrus	Ezra 1:1-4
537/6 BC	The Return under Sheshbazzar The Altar Built The Celebration of Tabernacles	Ezra 1:5-3:6
536/5 BC	The Laying of the Temple Foundation	Ezra 3:7-13

536/5-520 BC	The Work on the Temple Stopped	Ezra 4:1-5, 24
520 BC	The Work on the Temple Resumed	Ezra 5:1-6:13
515 BC	The Temple Completed The Celebration of Passover	Ezra 6:14-22
486 BC	An Accusation concerning the Inhabitants of Judah to King Ahasuerus (Esther's husband)	Ezra 4:6
464 BC (?)	A Letter of Accusation to Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:7
464 BC (?)	A Letter concerning the Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem	Ezra 4:8-23
458 BC	The Decree of Artaxerxes The Return of Ezra The Problem of Mixed Marriages	Ezra 7:1-10:16
457 BC	The Report concerning Those with Foreign Wives	Ezra 10:17-44
446 BC	The Report to Nehemiah concerning Jerusalem	Nehemiah 1:1-11
445 BC	The Decree of Artaxerxes The Return of Nehemiah The Rebuilding of the Wall The Repopulating of Jerusalem The Teaching of Ezra The Celebration of Tabernacles The Confession and Covenant of the People The Dedication of the Walls	Nehemiah 2:1-13:3
445-433 BC	The First Governorship of Nehemiah	(Nehemiah 5:14-15)

430-423 BC	The Second Governorship of Nehemiah	Nehemiah 13:4-31
------------	--	------------------