

## BIBLE READING FOR 2023

**WEEK #24** **EZRA, NEHEMIAH & ESTHER** **06-11-23**

Monday - Ezra 1-7

Wednesday - Nehemiah 4-9

Friday - Esther 2-10

Tuesday - Ezra 8 - Nehemiah 3

Thursday - Nehemiah 10 - Esther 1

**Ezra** tells us about Judah after the period of exile in Babylon and gives information about two of the three stages in which the Jews returned to their homeland. Zerubbabel led a group of about 50,000 to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. when Cyrus king of Persia decreed they could go, and with government assistance, rebuild the temple to worship God. Then Ezra took approximately 1,750 with him when he went to Judah's capitol city in about 458 B.C.. Since he was a scribe and very familiar with the law of Moses he was sent to teach the people God's word and encourage them to be diligent in living righteous lives. They needed a godly man like Ezra to help them become more committed to God and to make the changes necessary in their own lives to be in harmony with His will.

**The author** is understood by most to be Ezra himself. One suggestion as to the possible date of writing is in 445 B.C. just before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, but we have nothing telling us exactly when it was written.

**An outline** for Ezra: 1.) Zerubbabel's return to Jerusalem 1-6  
2.) Ezra's return to Jerusalem 7-10

**Nehemiah** deals with the third group of Jews to go back to Jerusalem. This trip takes place in 445 B.C. and is led by Nehemiah. As a cup bearer to King Artaxerxes in Persia he undoubtedly enjoyed a very pleasant life, but when Nehemiah learned of the misery that the remnant was experiencing in Judah, he was grieved by their situation. After hearing that the city was still basically in ruins, with its wall broken down and its gates burned with fire, he gained permission to go and make necessary repairs. His first goal was to rebuild the wall and the gates to the city. Inspiring the people to action, he accomplished this task in fifty-two days, in spite of dangerous opposition. In addition to the physical improvements and stability that he helped bring about, Nehemiah also worked with Ezra to bring about spiritual reforms. They emphasized that the restoration of God's people could not be complete without serving Him according to His law.

**The author** appears to be Nehemiah. If he wrote after he returned to Jerusalem from a visit to King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 13:6-7), the year would have been about 425 B.C.. Yet, like most books, we are not sure when Nehemiah was written.

**An outline** for Nehemiah: 1.) Nehemiah helps rebuild Jerusalem's wall 1-7  
2.) Spiritual reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra 8-13

**Esther** follows Nehemiah in our Old Testaments but the events it covers take place before Ezra or Nehemiah either one made their journeys to Jerusalem in service to the Lord. The book is named after the Jewish orphan girl who was made Queen of Persia by Ahasuerus, a Persian king who was also known as Xerxes. He reigned from about 486-465 B.C.. This means that the story told in Esther happened during a

period in between what is recorded in Ezra chapters six and seven. In Ezra chapter six the temple is completed in approximately 515-516 B.C.. Then chapter seven begins with the journey of Ezra to Jerusalem in about 458 B.C.. It is in this intervening span of almost 60 years that the actions of God's people which we read about in the book of Esther occurred.

When Esther becomes queen she is able to, at risk of death, intercede on behalf of the Jewish people and successfully request help from her husband, King Ahasuerus. As a result of Esther's efforts, along with assistance from her cousin Mordecai, the Jews are saved from extinction and Mordecai is made a powerful ruler in Persia. All of this was to be remembered during the Feast of Purim, which was instituted in the latter part of the book of Esther.

**The author** and date of writing are unknown.

**The theme** of the book is the deliverance of God's people in spite of the scheming of an evil Persian official by the name of Haman. Even though the name of God does not occur anywhere in this book it is very clear that the events that take place show how God's providence is never to be underestimated in the lives of His people.

**An outline** of the book of Esther: 1.) Esther is made queen 1-2  
2.) The rise and fall of Haman 3-7  
3.) Jewish victory and the Feast of Purim 8-10

**Questions** for Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther:

- 1.) What happened to the priests that could not locate their ancestral records to prove they were from the tribe of Levi in Ezra 2:62?
- 2.) In Ezra 3:8 what was begun in Jerusalem?
- 3.) Who helped the Jews be successful in their efforts in Ezra 6:14?
- 4.) In Nehemiah 2:13 what did Nehemiah do at night?
- 5.) What did King Ahasuerus discover in Esther 6:3?

**Answers** to questions for Week #23 – Romans 1-16:

- 1.) Glory, honor and peace.
- 2.) Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.
- 3.) He sent Christ to die for us, while we were sinners.
- 4.) Sin killed him through the Law.
- 5.) They did not compare to the glory that was to be revealed.