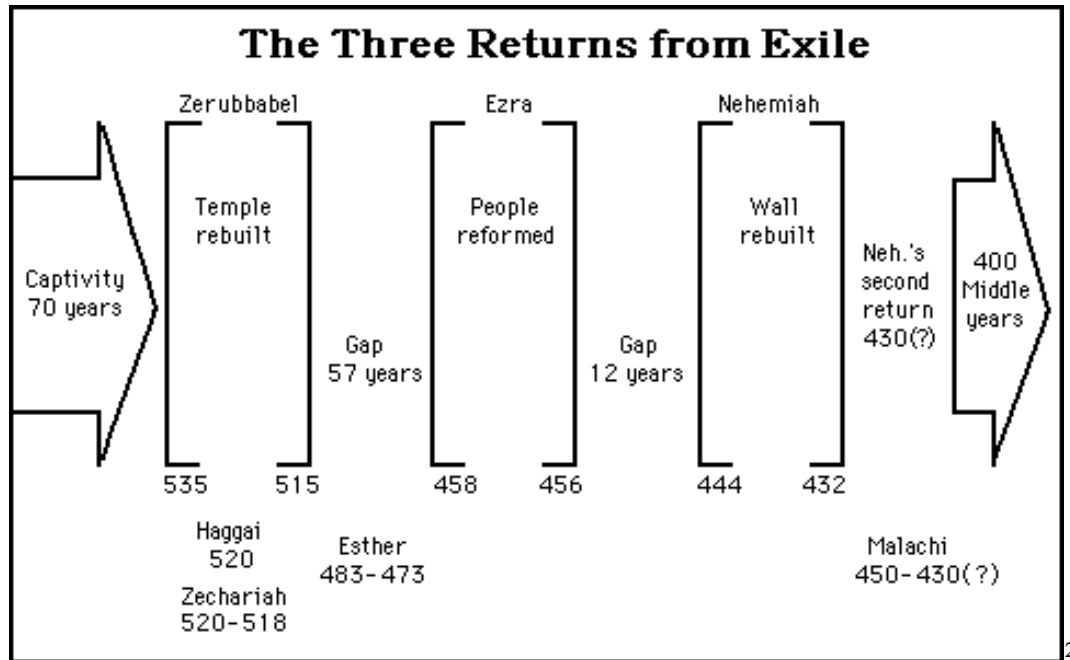


INTRO REMARKS:

Ezra/Nehemiah

A. Introduction

¹ Notes prepared with help of The Master's Seminary BI 501 Bible Survey syllabus.



1. Title
 - a. Hebrew: "Ezra and Nehemiah"
 - b. LXX: "Esdras B"
 - c. Vulgate: "I & II Esdrae"
2. Date of Events: From the Decree of Cyrus (538 B. C.) to the second governorship of Nehemiah (c. 432 B. C.). [CBCOT, 35-6]
3. Canonical Connection: After "Daniel" and before "Chronicles" (cf.: Ezra 1:1-4 with II Chron. 36:22-23)

² John Martin, BKC, 1:651.

Hebrew Canonical Order in the OT

LAW		PROPHETS		WRITINGS
Genesis		Joshua		Psalms
Exodus	<i>Former</i>	Judges		Job
Leviticus	<i>Prophets</i>	1-2 Samuel		Proverbs
Numbers		1-2 Kings	<i>Pre-</i>	Ruth
Deuteronomy			<i>Exilic</i>	Song of Songs
			<i>Writings</i>	Ecclesiastes
	<i>Latter</i>	Isaiah		Lamentations
	<i>Prophets</i>	Jeremiah		Esther
		Ezekiel		Daniel
		The Twelve	<i>Post-</i>	Ezra-Nehemiah
			<i>Exilic</i>	1-2 Chronicles
			<i>Writings</i>	

4. Literary Observations

- a. First person sections in E, 7:27-8:34; 9:1-15; N, 1:1-7:73; 12:27-13:30
- b. Aramaic in Ezra, 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26

Ezra 4:7-8 And in the days of Artaxerxes, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of his colleagues wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the text of the letter was written in Aramaic and translated *from* Aramaic. ⁸ Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to King Artaxerxes, as follows—

B. Outline

Ezra: Rebuilding the Temple of God & People of God

1. Return & Reconstruction Under Zerubbabel (1-6)
2. Return & Reform Under Ezra (7-10)

Nehemiah: Rebuilding the Walls

1. Rebuilding the Walls (1-7)
2. Reviving the People (8-10)
3. Reinforcing the Work (11-13)

C. Major 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)
- b. The Sovereign God (E, 1, 6, 7, 8; N, 2, 4, 6, 7, 13)

- 1) “The hand of God” (E, 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; N 2:8, 18)
- 2) “The Lord stirred the spirit (E, 1:1, 5)
- 3) “The eye of God” (E, 5:5)
- 4) “The Lord turned the heart” (E, 6:22)
- 5) “God frustrated” (N, 4:15)
- 6) “From our God” (N, 6:16)
- 7) “God put into my heart” (N, 7:5)
- 8) “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)

Ezra 8:21-23 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God to seek from Him a safe journey for us, our little ones, and all our possessions. ²² For I was ashamed to request from the king troops and horsemen to protect us from the enemy on the way, because we had said to the king, "The hand of our God is favorably disposed to all those who seek Him, but His power and His anger are against all those who forsake Him." ²³ So we fasted and sought our God concerning this *matter*, and He listened to our entreaty.

Nehemiah 2:4-5 Then the king said to me, "What would you request?" So I prayed to the God of heaven. ⁵ I said to the king, "If it please the king, and if your servant has found favor before you, send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it."

3. The Return of the Exiled Jews to the Land

- How do we calculate the 70 years?

Jeremiah 29:10 "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place.'"

The *Expositor's Bible Commentary*: "keep these stages of the Captivity in mind when computing the 70 years of exile announced by Jeremiah 29:10; the interval between the first deportation in 605 B.C., in which Daniel himself was involved, and 536 B.C., when the first returnees under Zerubbabel once more **set up an altar in Jerusalem**, amounted to 70 years. Likewise, the interval between the destruction of the first temple by Nebuzaradan in 586 and the completion of the 2nd temple by Zerubbabel in 516 was about 70 years" (comments on Daniel 1:1-2). (In either case, we're not going to get God on a technicality, & His word was precisely fulfilled, whether or not a sinful human historian was able to understand how it was all calculated).

- This would have been a major event for the Jews.
- Why record names, families, & numbers of people in Ez & Neh?

1) on a human level:

2) on a divine level:

Psalm 119:160 The sum of Your word is truth, & every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting.

Psalm 12:6 The words of the Lord are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

- The return would've seemed very much like the 2nd Exodus to them:

- 3 waves of return³:
 - The first wave, about 538 B.C. Babylon had taken the Jews captivity originally in 3 waves (605, 597, 586). Cyrus of Persia then conquered Babylon in 539 B.C., and in 538, God moves in his heart (Ezra 1:1-4), to send the Jews back. The trip would've taken them 3-5 months (Ezra 7:8-9).
 - Estimates say that about 50,000 Jews returned in this first wave. So, **from that 50,000**, and the other 2 waves, the nation will be rebuilt.

Return	Date	Scripture	Jewish Leader	Persian Ruler
1	538 B.C.	Ezra 1-6	Zerubbabel, Joshua	Cyrus
2	458 B.C.	Ezra 7-10	Ezra	Artaxerxes
3	445 B.C.	Neh. 1-13	Nehemiah	Artaxerxes

4. The Temple/House of God (E, 1-10; N, 2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)

- ✠ Solomon's glorious Temple was demolished finally in 586 BC. So, when they return, there is no temple.

5. The Law (E, 3, 7, 10; N, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13)

³ MacArthur Study Bible, p. 641.

Ezra 7:10 For Ezra had **set his heart** to **study** the law of the Lord and to **practice it**, and **to teach** His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

- The importance of exegetically-based, expository preaching is brought out in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 8:3–6 He **read from it** before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday...and all the people were attentive to the book of the law. ⁴ Ezra the scribe stood at a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose... ⁵ Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. ⁷ ...**the Levites explained** the law to the people while the people remained in their place. ⁸ They read from the book, from the law of God, **explaining** to give the sense so that they understood...

Neh 9:3 While they stood in place, they read from the book of the law of the Lord their God **for a fourth of the day**; and **for another fourth they confessed and worshiped** the Lord their God.

6. Levites (E, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; N, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)
7. Laboring to Restore the Dignity of God’s People (E, 1:5, 2:68, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10; N, 1:3, 2, 3, 4:17-23, 5:3, 6:1-19)

Neh 1:3 They said to me, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire."

Neh 2:17-18 Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach." ¹⁸ I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.

Neh 4:17, 21 Those who were rebuilding the wall & those who carried burdens took their load with one hand doing the work & the other holding a weapon.. So we carried on the work with half of them holding spears from dawn until the stars appeared.

Nehemiah 6:2-4 then Sanballat and Geshem sent a message to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together at Chephirim in the plain of Ono." But they were planning to harm me. So I sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and come down to you?" They sent messages to me four times in this manner, and I answered them in the same way.

****Don't come off the wall!**

Nehemiah 6:15-17 So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. When all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations surrounding us saw it, they lost their confidence; for they recognized that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them.

8. The Sin of the People (E, 9, 10; N, 1, 5, 13)

9. The Confession of the People (E, 10; N, 9)

Purpose of Ezra/Neh: Although Yahweh sovereignly reestablished the theocracy under godly leadership during the time of Gentile oversight and oppression, the sons of Israel failed to follow Yahweh.

D. Bibliography

1. Exegetical: Fensham, *The Books of the Ezra & Nehemiah* (NICOT).

Fensham better than WBC. Williamson (WBC) good for scholarly research but conclusions can be shaky.

2. English Interpretation: Kidner, *Ezra & Nehemiah* (TOTC).

Breneman, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NAC).

3. Expositional: James Boice