



EZRA

Welcome to the book of Ezra!

As you approach your study of Ezra, meditate on the contents of the book represented in the overview chart below. What are the major movements of Ezra and how do they relate to the themes of reconstruction and reformation? Draw correlations in reconstruction of the temple building with that of the true building of God (1 Peter 2:4-10) and habitation of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:16). These Scriptures reveal the importance of the principles we will be gleaning in Ezra. The phrase "return, reform the Temple" reflects the necessity of evaluation, return to the principles of God, and reformation in our hearts.

EZRA	Return/Reform
RECONSTRUCTION under Zerubbabel	REFORMATION under Ezra
1:3,5; 2:1,2	7:25-28
Return...2:1,2,68	Return...7:6; 8:31,32
Rebuild...6:15	Reform...10:19
1-6	7-10

"For Ezra had set his heart." 7:10

Take this opportunity to examine each of the references within the overview chart. What have you learned thus far in Ezra?

A key verse of Ezra is found in 7:10. Ezra's character (as well as his contemporary, Nehemiah) is a shining example of a man who was devoted to God. As you read, look for principles of return to God, rebuilding that which has been torn down, and a reforming that which is not right.

1 Chronicles opens with historical statements through the returning genealogies and closes with the specifics of David's reign. 2 Chronicles reviews Solomon's splendor (1 Kings) and closes with the split in the kingdom and scattering of God's chosen people into captivity. Ezra begins with a re-building of Solomon's temple...and return to God-pleasing worship!

Open your heart to evaluation of your own temple-worship as you read.

Are you worshipping Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24)? In what ways do you need reconstruction? Reformation?

NAME, Date, and Author

The book of Ezra, like Ruth, Job, and Esther; is named after its principal character. Although the author is not mentioned, the use of the first and third persons indicate that Ezra himself wrote the book, probably using various official documents. The latest event recorded in the book is the reformation under Ezra, the year after his arrival at Jerusalem, 456 B.C. The book was probably written a few years after that event.

OTHER BACKGROUND

If this book were named for its subject rather than after its author, it would probably be called "The Book of the Return" or "The Book of the Remnant." The book pictures the re-establishment of the Jews in the Promised Land following the Babylonian captivity. There are two distinct returns mentioned in Ezra. The first was under Zerubbabel (chapters 1-6). Nearly 80 years later, the second return takes place under Ezra (chapters 7-10). The key phrase of the book is the much used "go up" or "went up". Another key word is "Jerusalem." The name of this city is used 47 times in the book. The story of Ezra is the account of the "going up" of the exiled Jews to "Jerusalem" to rebuild the temple. Between chapters 6 and 7 is an approximate 60-year gap during which the events of the book of Esther transpire. Esther provides a commentary on Jewish life in Persia for those who do not return to Jerusalem. From the second chapter of Ezra, we may determine that the total number of exiles who took Cyrus up on his offer to return home was about 50,000 people, a small percentage of the total Jewish population...only a "remnant".

It is also of interest to note that as the Jews were returning to their homeland under Zerubbabel and Ezra, other great individuals were having a profound impact around the world: Buddha in India, Confucius in China, and Socrates in Greece.

Why study the book of Ezra?

1. The principle of Matthew 6:21, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" is clearly seen in this book. As the captivity drew to a close, Cyrus made a startling proclamation: "You are all free to go home!" The Jews could now return to Jerusalem all expenses paid. But only a small minority accepted the offer. Why? Because after 60 years, most of the people had built houses, raised families, and established careers in Babylon. They had no desire to face the difficult and hazardous 900-mile trek back home to a destroyed city. Only those whose hearts were committed to God volunteered for the trip. In our affluent society, it is easy to come under the influence of affluence. Whatever demands your time, talents, or treasure will certainly draw your affections. Examine your investments. Is a house, car, boat, or person stealing your heart from following God? What changes do you need to make in order to identify more fully with the remnant of 50,000 Jews who returned home and the "remnant of Christians" who have set their affections on the things above, not on things of the earth (Colossians 3:2)?

2. Ezra also furnishes a Christ-follower with how to deal with a problem immediately! The mixed marriage problem of chapters 9-10, when handled prayerfully by Ezra, produced such a sense of urgency among the people that they assembled in a driving rain to deal with it - an excellent example of problem solving. Also, while their sin was front-page headlines and cause for shame, the listing of their names also documents for all time a group of men who dealt courageously and uncompromisingly with sin in their lives.



Ezra Chapter Chart

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Return to the Lord!

Read 1:1-2:7

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What was the decree of Cyrus? Who was Cyrus? What was his motivation?
2. What was the expected motivation for the returning Jews to return home?
3. Which groups actually returned? Who stirred them up?
4. Why are the returning family groups named?
5. Did they return to specific areas?
6. What happened to those who could not trace their ancestry? Why?

What about today?

1. What do the actions of Cyrus the king reveal about God's sovereignty?
2. Evaluate your own position before God. Do any of these principles of return apply to you?
3. Notice the phrase "He is the God who is in Jerusalem" repeated several times in chapter 1.
 1. God was making it clear that the return was to Him - over and above the Holy Land of the Hebrews!

Return to God is a recurring theme throughout Scripture. Let us be careful to "walk worthy" of our call. We must "pay close attention" not to drift from God's desires for our lives!

My thoughts about my personal need for return:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
3		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What do we see that reveals the status of the people's unity?
2. What was the first thing to be accomplished and why did they do it?
3. What does the "but" in verse 6 reveal?
4. Why was there a need for overseers?

What about today?

1. How does the unity of the believers with whom you fellowship compare with lessons learned in Ezra?
2. As you survey the condition of your own life, what would be your response to rebuilding: weeping or joy? Why?
3. As you review the condition of the church around you, what is your response: weeping or joy? Why?

For a New Testament correlation of building on a foundation, read 1 Corinthians 3:9-17. How are you involved building the Temple of God?

My thoughts about building the Temple of God and myself as a builder:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
4		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What compromise was offered? Why was it so strongly rejected?
2. How did the enemies of Judah and Benjamin try to interfere with the work?
What was the result? Why was it done?
3. What reasons were given for the Jews to stop building? Why did they stop?
Should they have stopped?

What about today?

1. What are some compromises that we can make in building our Temple that would not be pleasing to Christ? Are you involved in any? Do you know other believers who are? What should be our response?
2. What types of interference have you encountered?
3. What are some common reasons given today for delaying or stopping the work?

The world, our flesh, and the devil will always oppose building for God. We must be careful to not fall victim or falter in our efforts to rebuild! Is there any opposition you need to confront or push through today? Read Luke 9:57-62 for Jesus' expectations as we face opposition.

My thoughts about compromise in building:

Construction Resumed!

Read Chapter 5-6

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
5		
6		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Who played a primary role in this renewal? Take the time to read the messages of these men. They are located in the last three books of the Old Testament.
2. Had there been another decree at the time of renewed building?
3. Why was the letter sent? What was the response?
4. What testimony is given regarding God's greatness?
5. What events followed the completion of the temple and why?
6. What was the reason for their rejoicing?

What about today?

What do the messages of Haggai and Zechariah reveal about the spiritual state of the Jews at this time? What are some comparisons or contrasts with today?

The Jews began rebuilding because of obedience to God that superseded obedience to kings or governors. So, too, "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28,29). Do you have this same commitment to kingdom obedience?

My thoughts about obeying God when it is unpopular or difficult:

Return under Ezra!

Read Chapter 7-8

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
7		
8		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What made Ezra effective?
2. What did Artaxerxes specifically allow Ezra to do?
3. What was Artaxerxes view of Ezra? His view of God?
4. What does 8:21-23 reveal about Ezra?
5. What did Ezra see as a primary need for the people?

What about today?

1. As you observe Ezra, what similarities do you see in your own character?
What differences do you perceive?
2. Ezra took time to humble himself before God and make specific requests of God.
We can learn much from his example!

Ezra is a good example of godly character. How do you "measure up" in devotion and insight?

My thoughts about what will make me effective spiritually:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
9		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What was the condition of the returned exile's spiritual lives?
What was Ezra's response? His request?
2. What had the people forsaken?
3. What do we learn about Ezra's view of God and His holiness?
4. How did the Temple serve as a "peg" for the nation?
What is this image meant to convey?

What about today?

1. The repentance and confession of Ezra preceded the revival of the people. 1 John 1:9 is reflected here. Do you see a need for confession, repentance, or revival? In what way? What must you do?
2. Reread 9:15. Our guilt serves to reveal our sin and bring us to God. If we are to serve as "pegs," we must have a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a sincere faith (1 Timothy 1:5)! What is your condition? What is your confession?

My thoughts on being a peg in my sphere of influence:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
10		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. How did the people respond to Ezra's actions?
2. What sin did they confess? What action did they take?
3. How serious was the action? Doesn't this seem somewhat harsh or unfair?
4. Note how the book closes.
(Read Nehemiah 10:30: 12 years later and Nehemiah 13:23; 30 years later).

What about today?

1. How would you feel if you were in the Jew's position? How do you think God viewed the situation?
2. This same principle is reflected in 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. How does God feel about agreements and partnerships with the world?

God desires purity in His people. Along with confession and repentance comes a putting aside of the sin that so easily entangles us.

CONCLUSION

The book of Ezra deals with rebuilding the Temple. Take a parting moment to review the highlights of your study. Have you adequately confronted your own building of the Temple? Have you evaluated the quality of your lifestyle by the standards of revival and renewal in Ezra? What about the standards of the church in which you fellowship? Is the Word held high? Is repentance evident? Is "putting away" apparent? Read Romans 12:1-2 in light of God's desire for our purity.

My thoughts about spiritually healthy responses to sin:

KINGS OF THE EXILE & RETURN

605-562 BC...Nebuchadnezzar
Jeremiah 34:1; Daniel 1-4

539 BC...Belshazzar
Daniel 5:7,8

539 BC...Cyrus (Zerubbabel)
Daniel 10; Isaiah 44:28-45:1-3

522 BC...Darius the Mede
Daniel 5:31

486...Xerxes (Ahasuerus)
Esther

465 BC...Artaxerxes 1
Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

424 BC...Darius 2
404 BC...Artaxerxes 2

NEHEMIAH



Welcome to the book of Nehemiah!

As you launch into your study in the book of Nehemiah, meditate on the contents of the book represented in the overview chart below. What are the three major movements in Nehemiah? Notice the progression of events. An important emphasis in Nehemiah is found as we consider the main character. You will want to scrutinize Nehemiah's actions and reactions as the message of the book unfolds. Some initial character observations can be found in 1:4, 7, 11; 2:4, 12, 18; 5:14, 16; 6:8, 9. The "reconstruction" of the Jerusalem walls will give you many principles of building in your own life of faith. As Ezra called the people to return, reform, and rebuild the Temple, Nehemiah sees the need to fortify the walls that surround the temple and the city. Check out the words of Ezekiel in 22:30.

NEHEMIAH			Renew/Rebuild		
Nehemiah Arrives		Walls Restored	People Revived		
2:11,12		6:15,16	8:3,17,18		
1-2		3-6	7-13		

"I also applied myself to the work on this wall." 5:16

Take this opportunity to examine each of the references in the overview chart. These reveal the main thrust of the corresponding section. What have you learned thus far in Nehemiah? A key verse of Nehemiah is found in 5:16 and reveals Nehemiah's dedication to the work of rebuilding. Look for principles of rebuilding and reviving that you can bring into your own life as you read.

Ezra begins re-establishment of God-pleasing temple worship and closes with a re-commitment to living consistent with God's standards (10:19). Nehemiah opens with a renewed interest in Jerusalem (1:2) and closes with a request to be remembered for good (13:31).

Open your heart as you read.

Do you feel you are "standing in the gap?" (Ezekiel 22:30) The building up of the walls (the spiritual Body of Christ and the faith of individual Christ-followers) is to be an important aspect of our lives. Consider your building ways as you evaluate your own spiritual work of your life!

AUTHOR

"The words of Nehemiah, the son of Hachaliah" (1:1) is the clear testimony of the book. This is not the Nehemiah who returned to Jerusalem from Babylon under Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; Nehemiah 7:7), but an eminent Jew of that name, which means "Jehovah Comforts," a fitting name for the one Jehovah would use to bring comfort to His people through the rebuilding of the walls of the Holy City.

DATE

The events of the book cover a period of 20 years from 445 to 425 B.C. in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus of Persia. Although the book may have been written in parts as the events occurred, it seems to have been written as a retrospective. Hence, a date shortly after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem to initiate the final reforms. 425 B.C. seems the best estimate for the writing of this book.

OTHER BACKGROUND

The main theme is "rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem" (cf. 1:3; 2:13, 15, 17; 4:6; 6:15; 12:27). The words "wall" or walls are used 32 times in the narrative, while "build" is used 23 times. The book has two major sections in it. In the first part the emphasis is on Reconstructing the Walls (chapters 1-7). In the second, the emphasis is on the Re-instructing of the People (chapters 8-13). The walls need reconstructing because a country without defenses cannot hope to survive. The people needed re-instructing in heart and mind because a people without the truth cannot hope to stand. Nehemiah's dream of rebuilding the walls spreads like a contagious disease. A united people rise up with trowel in hand to begin the work of repairing the eight gates and more than two miles of walls surrounding the city. Nehemiah's strategy is simple: to give each person a vested interest in the work. To insure both speed and quality of work, he assigns each worker the portion of wall nearest his own home. It's difficult to do a sloppy job when you know that if enemies break a defective wall, the first people jeopardized will be your own family. The result of such sound, godly leadership and management is found in Nehemiah's own words,

Why study the book of Nehemiah?

1. The man Nehemiah furnishes us a first rate character study of a godly manager or leader. He stands out as a man of prayer, a man of faith, a man of courage, a man of action. Few Bible characters can match the management skills of Nehemiah. Nehemiah wisely divided the work responsibility among many small groups, employed all available workers, provided incentives for doing a good job, and gave adequate recognition for each person involved (chapter 3). These management principles of authority, incentive, delegation of responsibility, and recognition can help multiply your time and talents at work, school, church, or home. Why not apply one to a particular area at your job this week? They really work!

2. This book also gives direction and encouragement to kingdom builders who lack big smiles, stained glass voices, crystal cathedrals, and 200 voice choirs for backup. Body members in the church are reassured that leadership abilities are not always measured flashy backup, and that leadership abilities are not always measured by the self-confidence of high-powered personalities. As Christians, we can follow the example of the man Nehemiah: the man with a boss who is not a believer, the man who sorrows over the despicable condition of many of God's people, the man who is criticized and discouraged, who faces financial hardship, who must resolve strained relationships, who must persevere toward important goals, and who emerges on top of it all!



Nehemiah Chapter Chart

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Setting the stage for Nehemiah!

Read Chapters 1-2

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What were the reasons behind the response of Nehemiah to the condition of Jerusalem?
2. What did Nehemiah's response specifically include?
3. What heart components made up the prayer of Nehemiah?
4. How did Nehemiah show his reliance upon God in these first two chapters?
5. What was Nehemiah's approach to inspecting the walls of Jerusalem and why did he use it?

What about today?

1. How would you describe your feelings about the condition of the spiritual walls of the church today? The walls of your own life?
2. In comparison to Nehemiah, how would you describe your own reliance upon God?
3. Inspect your own spiritual walls. In what ways do they need either minor or major repair?
4. The New Testament is filled with "one another" commands. Take the time to consider each one and apply it to your part in building the walls of God!

My thoughts about my spiritual needs for repair and my involvement in building the household of God:

The Work on the Wall Begins!

Read Chapters 3-4

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
3		
4		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What is the recurring phrase in 3:2,4,5? What does it reveal about the planning of Nehemiah? (Also note a repeated phrase in 3:28 - 31)!
2. The building process is addressed in two ways. What are they? What was the response of the Jews?
3. Who was credited with frustrating the plan for rebuilding?
4. What was the dual role each man fulfilled in chapter 4? Why was it necessary?
5. What were the specific steps that Nehemiah implemented to protect the city?

What about today?

1. We see the necessity of building in front of our portion of the wall. What do you see as ways you can "take up the sword"? Labor on the walls?
2. Paul said in Romans that "if God is for us, who can be against us?" How is this portrayed in this section and how have you seen it as true in your own life?
3. Do you consider yourself a contributor to building for God? In what ways?
4. In what ways has your building process attacked?

My thoughts on the condition of the walls in front of my own household:

The Work Opposed & Completed!

Read Chapters 5-6

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
5		
6		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Here are at least four additional ways opposition was mounted against the work.
What were they?
2. With whom did Nehemiah consult in dealing with the first problem?
What were the ruler's and the noble's responses?
3. What do we learn about Nehemiah's relationship with the people as their governor?
4. How was Nehemiah able to perceive the treachery of Shemaiah?

What about today?

1. Note the short time it took for such a monumental task (6:15). What was the response of Israel's enemies? In what ways do you see God working miraculously in your life of building?
2. If we desire to follow God we will undergo persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Have you undergone any similar types of opposition as you have sought to follow Christ? Describe it.

My thoughts on overcoming wall-building opposition:

Registration & Reading!

Read Chapters 7-8

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
7		
8		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What did Nehemiah look for in others to determine their usefulness for service?
2. Why did God think it necessary to have Nehemiah register the people?
3. What was the result of not having an ancestral registration? Why?
4. What do we learn from the response of the people to the Word about our own attitude concerning God's Word?

What about today?

1. In what ways do you feel you measure up as a profitable servant in light of the standards of Nehemiah?
2. Evaluate your own response to God's Word. In what ways do you see callousness to the truth? Submission to truth?
3. In what ways do you see Hebrews 4:12, 13 in operation in your life?

My thoughts on what makes me useful for service:

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
9		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What are the prominent and recurring words in this chapter?
2. What is recorded as the response of the Jewish "fathers" to the Word of the Lord?
(list specifics)
3. What is given as the key reason behind the root problem?
4. How did these Jews attempt to exceed their father's spirituality?

What about today?

1. These are vivid examples of past resistance to the Word and the result upon succeeding generations. How does this correlate with the passage found in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13? In what ways does it illuminate your own spiritual heritage?
2. What weight do you place upon obeying the voice of the Lord?

My thoughts about the ways I seem to resist the Word of the Lord:

The ways I choose to respond to the Word of God:

Covenant Renewal!

Read Chapters 10-11

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
10		
11		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What were the specific responsibilities of the covenant? A covenant is a solemn agreement between two parties.
2. Why was it necessary to cast lots to determine who would live in Jerusalem?

What about today?

1. Think of some specific responsibilities today's Christ-followers have to our covenant with God. Use the data from this section as a basis for your answers.
2. How serious were the people about returning to God and His ways? Sincerity is important, but a person may be very sincere - yet sincerely wrong.

Malachi prophesied only decades after these events. Look at his message and what the concept of returning to God meant to this group of people. What should "return" mean to us?

My thoughts about my own need for covenant renewal:

Walls Rededicated - People Revived!

Read Chapters 12-13

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
12		
13		

KEY QUESTIONS:

1. What specific things were planned for rededication of the wall?
2. What were the specific reforms of the people?
3. What problems were soon encountered?
4. What significance do you see in 13:14, 22, 31?
5. What does the profaning of the Sabbath reveal? Why the strong response of Nehemiah to the traders and merchants?

What about today?

1. Once again we see the depraved nature of mankind. We can not afford to place confidence in our natural inclinations!
2. In what ways do we profane God's Sabbath today? Read Hebrews 4 concerning the Sabbath rest of the people of God!
3. How concerned are you about purity in your own body? Your own family? The group of people with whom I gather to honor God?

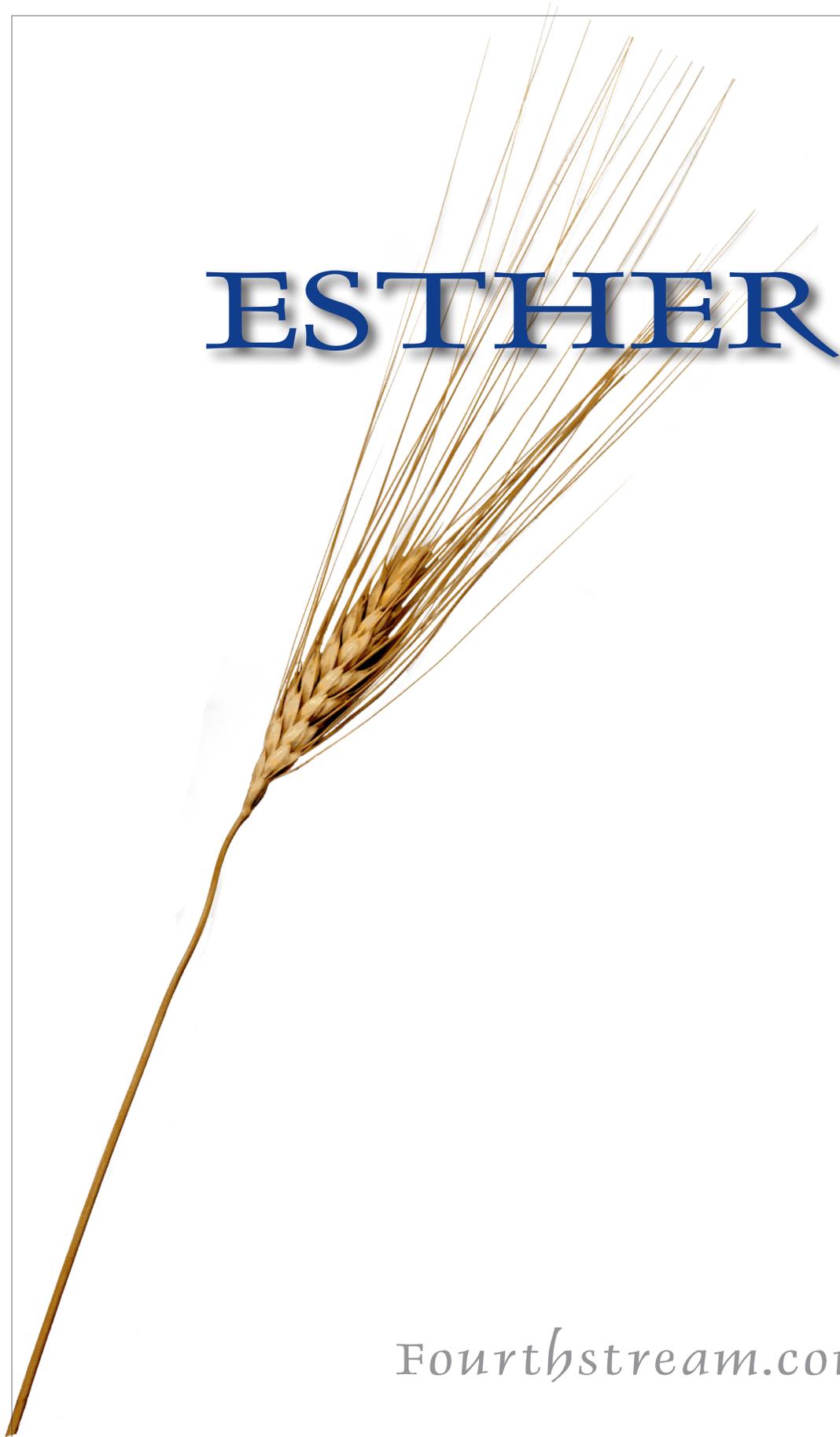
CONCLUSION

Ezra dealt with the rebuilding of the Temple. Nehemiah desired the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. Both were concerned about repentance, revival, and renewal in the hearts of the people of God! In what ways are the Church's walls in disrepair today?

What can you do to encourage and challenge yourself and others in the manner of Nehemiah?

The words of Ezekiel 22:30 echo in the ears of every disciple that chooses to live in a life pleasing to God!

ESTHER



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God Delivers

DANGER TO THE JEWS

3:1-15

The plot is set...2:21-23

The plot is formed...3:5,6

1 - 3

DELIVERANCE OF THE JEWS

The plot is frustrated...6:1-3

The plot is dissolved...7:8-10

4 - 10

"Relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews..." 4:14

Welcome to the book of Esther!

To begin your study of Esther, meditate on the content of the book represented in the overview chart above. Notice that there is a "plot" being formed against the Jews. It is conceived in 1-3 and places the exiled Jews in a perilous position. In chapters 4-10 we observe the miraculous deliverance by God through the persons of Mordecai and Queen Esther. *This book reveals the sovereign delivering power of Almighty God* (note: 2:8, 9, 20-23; 5:2; 6:1).

Notice the theme phrase at the bottom of the overview chart. Who was in danger? How did God use these circumstances to demonstrate His power? Once again God shows Himself strong on behalf of His chosen people! Take this opportunity to examine each of the references within the overview chart. What have you learned thus far about God in Esther? About man? About yourself?

A key verse of Esther is found in 4:16. As you read it as a preview for this study, also note 4:14. These two verses give you the basic thrust and story of Esther. How does the key verse reflect the overview of the book? Notice the key words: Queen Delivers. God remains faithful to provide and preserve His people even in the midst of their captivity! The name of God is not once mentioned in Esther, but His Person and Works are revealed in every chapter!

The Writer and Setting

The identity of the writer is unknown, although it is obvious that he was a native of Persia, not Palestine. It seems that the author translated existing Persian records because (1) the name of God is absent, (2) the use of the Persian word Purim, (3) the minute details about the Persian Empire and names of officials, (4) the designation of Esther as "the Queen", and (5) the naming of Mordecai as "the Jew".

Internal evidence (10:2) seems to indicate that Xerxes (465 B.C.) had died before the book was written and that the compilation of his official state history had preceded the writing of Esther. Most conservative scholars place the writing in the latter half of the Fifth Century B.C.

Understanding the awesome concept that God is in Control!

The three books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther record God's dealings with the Jews after going through the seventy years of captivity in Babylon. But while Ezra and Nehemiah deal with the small remnant of the people which returned to Judea, the book of Esther is concerned with the far greater number who stayed on in the land of their captivity. Five figures are most prominent in the book: Ahasuerus, the Persian king; Vashti, the deposed queen; Haman, the Jew-hater; Mordecai, the Jewish leader; and Esther, the Jewish girl who became queen. In the background are the royal palace, the Persian capital, and the several million Jews scattered throughout the emperor's domain.

Esther is the crucial figure in the drama since everything revolves around her elevation to the throne and her influence as queen. The book, therefore, is fittingly called after the name of Esther. *It describes events which took place at Susa, the principal Persian capital, and covers a period of 12 years.*

Why this Book?

The spiritual message of Esther is that God sees and knows and cares for His own. He may be out of their sight, but THEY are never out of His sight. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He may be invisible but He is also infallible, He never makes a mistake with His people, or lets them down. Think back after reading through the book and see how many elements reveal God's sovereign control...the king's drunken party and his order for Vashti, his queen, to make a public display of her beauty, Esther's selection to be queen, Mordecai's recorded but unrewarded bravery, Haman's casting of lots, the king's insomnia (and the cure he selected for overcoming it); the construction of Haman's ill-fated gallows. You cannot take away or alter a single one of those details without disrupting the entire story. But put them all together and you have one of the most remarkable demonstrations anywhere in Scripture of God at work behind the scenes...without ever once being mentioned by name!

Above this story is the sovereign hand of God at work in the lives of His people, placing Esther in the palace and Mordecai's name in the Persian chronicles "for such a time as this" (94:14). Why not make a similar list of the elements in your own life story that reveal God's sovereign control. Spend some time thanking Him for His providence!

Open your heart as you read!

Are you being diligent to develop all the gifts and talents He's entrusted to you? "Do not neglect your gift!" (2 Timothy 4:14).

Just as the Jews were in danger in captivity, the Devil is actively plotting harming God's people today (1 Peter 5:8,9). God has a purpose for His people and the events of our lives (Esther 4:14); and if we fail to please Him in this purpose, His will be inevitably accomplished through other means and/or persons. God is even able to raise up stones to worship Him (Luke 19:40)!

As you read, study, and meditate on Esther, look for God at work even though His name is not mentioned once in the book. The words of 2 Chronicles 16:9 are true today as well!

Does Esther's message of an involved and in-control God and an open and obedient servant have relevance to your life of faith?!



Esther Chapter Chart

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Chapter	Title	Key Verse
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

WALKING WITH THE WISE!

What principles of "Delivering Wisdom" do you glean from this book?

From the example of Mordecai:

From the conduct of Esther:

What was the deep heart motivation of Haman? What was the fruit of this desire?

Is the feast of Purim celebrated today? What does it entail?

What is most striking to you from this book?

What will you take with you from the book of Esther that will build your faith in God?

Chapter	Title	Key Verse
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		