

## **Ezra and Nehemiah**

Ezra and Nehemiah were probably one book originally. The Masoretic notes indicate that Nehemiah 3:32 is the middle verse of the document. It is generally believed that Ezra and Nehemiah are the authors, but the Bible does not explicitly say so. There is some difficulty in the dating of the events described in the book of Ezra and in harmonizing the timing of the two books. Ezra was priest and scribe and Nehemiah served as governor (Neh. 12:26).

### **Outline of Ezra**

Ezra continues the narrative of Chronicles. It recorded the efforts of the people to rebuild the temple and restore proper service to God. Enemies tried, with some success, to hinder the construction. Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, inspired the people to resume and finish the work. Ezra led the people in a revival, specifically leading them to put away unscriptural wives.

- I. Exiles freed to return to Judah (1-2)
- II. People rebuild the altar and temple (3-6)
  - A. Rebuilt the altar and began sacrifices (3:1-7)
  - B. Began to rebuild the temple (3:8-13)
  - C. Enemies opposed the rebuilding of the temple (4-6)
    1. Zerubbabel refused the help of enemies (4:1-5)
    2. Enemies wrote Artaxerxes to stop the work (4:6-24)
    3. Haggai and Zechariah motivated them to resume work (5-6)
      - a. Prophets urged the work (5:1-2; cf. Hag. 1)
      - b. Tattenai interfered and wrote Darius to stop the work (5:3-17)
      - c. Darius investigated and authorized the work (6:1-12)
      - d. Israel finished and dedicated the temple (6:13-18)
      - e. Israel resumed religious rituals (6:19-22)
- III. Ezra returned to Judah to teach (7-10)
  - A. Ezra sought to teach God's laws (7:1-10, note especially v. 10)
  - B. Ezra received approval from Artaxerxes (7:11-28)
  - C. A list of those who returned with Ezra (8:1-20)
  - D. Ezra returned to Judah (8:21-36)
    1. They fasted and asked God's protection (8:21-23)
    2. The temple wealth was divided among the priests (8:24-30)
    3. They arrived in Jerusalem (8:31-36)
  - E. Ezra led the people in putting away unscriptural wives (9-10)

## Outline of Nehemiah

Nehemiah recorded the efforts of the people to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king, Artaxerxes. He heard about the woes faced by his people in Jerusalem, since they had no wall to protect them. When the king recognized his sadness, he authorized him to go back and rebuild the wall. Even though enemies tried to thwart the rebuilding, the people were successful. The people were then led in a spiritual revival by Nehemiah and Ezra.

- I. Nehemiah went to Jerusalem (1-2)
  - A. Nehemiah heard that Jerusalem was unprotected and received authority from Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall (1:1-2:8)
  - B. Nehemiah inspected the walls and inspired the people to rebuild (2:9-18)
  - C. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem opposed the work (2:19-20)
- II. The wall was rebuilt (3-7)
  - A. Different groups worked on different sections of the wall (3)
  - B. The opposition continued, so the people worked while armed (4:1-23)
  - C. The distress of the poor interfered with the work; Nehemiah resolved it (5:1-19)
  - D. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem continued to interfere (6:1-19)
  - E. Walls were completed (6:15-7:4)
  - F. List of the returnees by family (7:5-73)
- III. Ezra and Nehemiah initiated spiritual reforms (8-10)
  - A. Reading and teaching of the Law (8:1-12)
  - B. Celebrating the feast of booths (8:13-18)
  - C. The people renewed their covenant with God (9-10)
    1. The people confessed sin (9:1-3)
    2. Some Levites lead a prayer of repentance (9:4-38)
    3. Terms of the covenant renewal (10)
      - a. Names listed on the written covenant renewal (9:38-10:27)
      - b. Details of the Law which they promise to keep (10:28-39)
- IV. Distribution of the population in Jerusalem and surrounding cities (11)
- V. List of priests and Levites (12:1-26)
- VI. Dedication of the wall (12:27-43)
- VII. Provision for the Levites and priests (12:44-47)
- VIII. Nehemiah leads in additional reforms (13)