

# PANORAMA PLUS 9

*Return From Exile*

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## NOTE TO THE STUDENT!

This material is structured in outline form, yet it is complete enough that the student can gain maximum benefit from the lectures if the material is read beforehand. There is much to cover; the best learning experience combines the student's reading(s) and the lecture overview.

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The Training Center

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## **PREFACE**

When the southern kingdom of Judah was captured, virtually destroyed and humiliatingly exiled, the prophetic words of Moses came true. “But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to be careful to follow all His commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:” (Deut 28:15). These curses were the promised exile to a foreign land (Deut 28:49-52), an exile of seventy years as predicted by Jeremiah the prophet (Jer 25, 29).

Daniel 9 records the repentant, confessional prayer of Daniel on behalf of the exiled Jews. He confessed both national sins (“we have transgressed”) and personal ones as well (“confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel”). This mediatorial act of repentance and confession unlocked the spiritual key to their captivity and set into motion events leading to “The Return from Exile.”

Biblically speaking, six books of the Hebrew Scriptures recount this return. Three are narrative (Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther); three are prophetic (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). This Panorama Plus study (number 9 of 12) looks at each of these post-exilic books.

The return will not prove to be easy. But God will raise up special individuals to accomplish His purposes. With this study, our Panorama survey completes the Old Testament. As Eugene Merrill (515) reminds us,

“The history of Old Testament Israel closes with the last chapter of the last book of the Old Testament canon. But the history of Israel as a kingdom of priests does not end there. In this respect the Old Testament is not a closed book but one that is open-ended to the purposes of God as reflected in the New Testament, purposes to be realized in the church and in eschatological Israel.”

For the King and His Kingdom!  
Robert V Cupp  
Summer, 2023

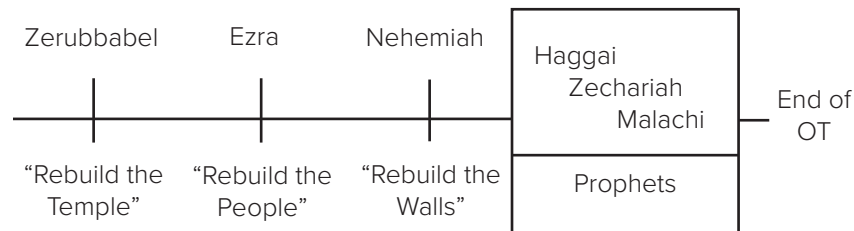
# **BACKGROUND MATERIALS**

## PANORAMA TIMELINES

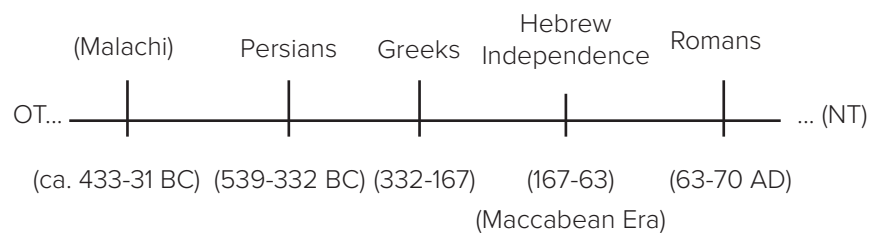
### Movement 8: Exile



### Movement 9: Return from Exile



### “Four Hundered Silent Years” (between the Testaments)



\* Roman domination – destruction of Jerusalem, putting down of the final rebellion; Roman Empire continues.

## RETURN FROM EXILE

### Background

#### The Demise of Juda/Jerusalem

2 Chronicles 36:15-19 (ESV)

*The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. <sup>16</sup> But **they kept mocking the messengers of God**, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. <sup>18</sup> And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. <sup>19</sup> And **they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem** and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.*

#### The Three Great Needs of the Jews/Jerusalem:

1. The people are spiritually hard-hearted and rebellious... they need to be “rebuilt.”
2. The temple (center of YHWH worship) has been destroyed... it needs to be “rebuilt.”
3. The walls of Jerusalem are broken down... they need to be “rebuilt.”

#### Insight:

But before these needs can be addressed, the captives must endure the deportation to Babylon which will last seventy years (as prophesied by Jeremiah 25, 29).

### **The Return from Exile: God's Rebuilding Process**

1. Rebuild the People: Ezra (Word of God)
2. Rebuild the Temple: Zerubbabel
3. Rebuild the Walls: Nehemiah

### **Prophetic Encouragements: God's Rebuilding Process**

1. Rebuild the Temple!! Haggai
2. Rebuild the Temple!! Zechariah  
(Renew the People)
3. Revive (again) the People!! Malachi

#### **PANORAMA PLUS 9 RETURN FROM EXILE**

This study will focus on the six books and Esther (historical books) plus Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (prophetic books). Each session of Plus Nine will address an overview to the message and themes of these six Biblical Books.

# SESSION 1

## The Book of Ezra

### I. PRAYER

### II. PANORAMA MOVEMENTS 1-9 (Old Testament)

PANORAMA: TWELVE MOVEMENTS	
Movement	Biblical Books
#1 Prologue	Genesis 1-11
#2 Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50; Job
#3 Redemption and Wanderings	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
#4 Conquest	Joshua
#5 Apostasy	Judges, Ruth
#6 Kingship: United Monarchy	1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11 (Pss, Prov, Eccl, Song of Solomon)
#7 Kingship: Divided Monarchy	1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings (Prophets - selected)
#8 Exile	Ezekiel, Daniel (Jeremiah)
<b>#9 Return from Exile and 400 Silent Years</b>	<b>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)</b>

**Note:**

Movements 1-9 comprise the Old Testament. Between Movement 9 and Movement 10 (Life of Christ) lie the four hundred years of silence (no revelations from God through angels, prophets, or other means).



### III. CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING

The post-exilic historical books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are related. The following chart (Wilkinson and Boa, 118) shows how these books are interrelated.

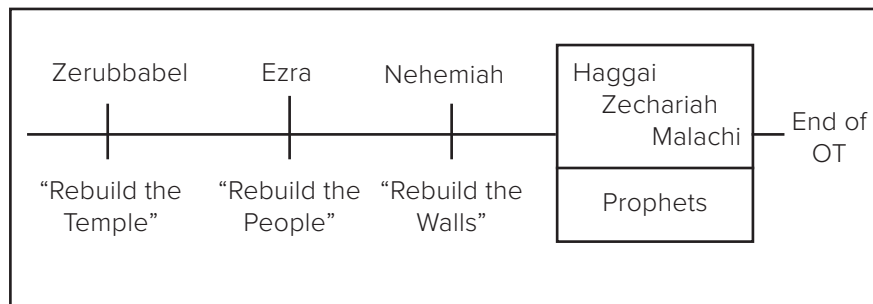
538-515 BC		483-473 BC		457 BC		444-425 BC
Zerubbabel		Esther		Ezra		Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6		Book of Esther		Ezra 7-10		Book of Nehemiah
First Return		In Persia		Second Return		Third Return

— Haggai (520 BC)

— Zechariah (520<sup>ff</sup> BC)

— Malachi (ca 433-31 BC)

### IV. PANORAMA PLUS 9 TIMELINE



## **V. BOOK OF EZRA**

### **A. Author**

The book does not specifically ascribe authorship to any individual, but Jewish tradition attributes the Book to Ezra, the scribe (see Ezr 7:28-9:15 and note the 1st person point of view, i.e. Ezra). Constable notes,

As a scribe (7:21), Ezra had the qualifications needed to write this book. He was a general contemporary of Nehemiah (Neh 8:1-9, 12:36). Another reference in the Talmud claimed that Ezra was a disciple of Baruch, Jeremiah's scribe. (Constable, *Ezra*, 2).

### **B. Theme of Ezra**

The Book of Ezra chronicles the first return of certain Jews in captivity. With the defeat of Babylon by Persia, a royal edict allowed any of the Jews to return to their homeland, rebuild their temple, and settle back in their land. The task would not prove to be an easy one. Opposition mounted, but a further decree from Darius provided political and material support to complete the temple project. Also, Ezra led a second return to the land during the reign of Artaxerxes (Ezr 7-10) and sparked a spiritual renewal with the reading and exposition of the Law (cf. Neh 8-9).

### **C. Interrelatedness of Ezra-Nehemiah**

While scholars continue to debate whether Ezra-Nehemiah was one book or two, chiastic studies have noted the following pattern that would seem to suggest that the books were originally one. Eugene Merrill (*Nelson's OT Survey*, 342) notes the following chiastic structure:

- 
- A Zerubbabel's return and list of returnees (Ezr 1-2)
  - B Building of the temple and opposition (Ezr 3-6)
  - C Return of Ezra (Ezr 7-8)
  - D Center: Purification of the people (Ezra 9-10)
  - C' Return of Nehemiah (Neh 1-2)
  - B' Building of walls and opposition (Neh 3:1-7:3)
  - A' Zerubbabel's return and list of returnees;  
final reforms (Neh 7:4-13:31)
- 

#### **D. Book of Ezra**

##### 1. Charted

<b>The Book of Ezra</b>			
Rebuild the Temple (Zerubbabel)		Rebuild the People (Ezra)	
1	6	7	10
First Return to Jerusalem		Second Return to Jerusalem	
1	2	7	8
Rebuilding of the Temple		Rebuilding of the People	
3	6	9	10
About 22 years (538-516 or 15 BC)		About 1 Year (458-457 BC)	

2. Outlined: **Book of Ezra**

Note that this broad outline will be the basis of the Biblical Development section to follow.

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**I. FIRST RETURN TO JERUSALEM:  
ZERUBBABEL (Chs 1-2)**

**A. Proclamation (ch 1)**

**B. List of Returnees (ch 2)**

**II. REBUILDING THE TEMPLE (Chs 3-6)**

**A. Initial Projects (ch 3)**

1. Rebuilding the altar (3:1-6)
2. Beginning the Temple (3:7-13)

**B. Opposition to the Project (ch 4)**

**C. Delaying of the Project (ch 5)**

**D. Completion of the Project (ch 6)**

1. Decree of Darius (6:1-12)
2. Dedication of the Temple (6:13-18)
3. Passover celebrated (6:19-22)

**III. SECOND RETURN TO JERUSALEM: EZRA  
(chs 7-10)**

**A. Proclamation (and Return) (ch 7)**

**B. List of returnees (ch 8)**

**C. Rebuilding the People (chs 9-10)**

1. Sin of the people (9:1-4)
  2. Prayer of Ezra (9:5-15)
  3. People's confession (10:1-6)
  4. Proclamation issued (10:7-17)
  5. Guilty listed (10:18-44)
-

## VI. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT

### A. First Return to Jerusalem: Zerubbabel (Ezr 1-2)

#### 1. Proclamation (Ezr 1)

##### a. Background insight

As far back as Moses' words in Deuteronomy 28-30, the Israelites were promised blessing for obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and cursings (discipline) for disobedience. The ultimate act of discipline would be temporary forfeiture of the privilege of living in the Abrahamic, covenantally-promised land.

Historically these warnings became facts with the Assyrian Captivity for Israel (north) and eventually Babylonian Captivity for Judah. The people of God were under divine discipline and nothing short of confession and repentance would allow restoration to the homeland.

While Jeremiah prophesied a captivity of 70 years (Jer 25, 30), perhaps it was Daniel's bold decision to act as national intercessor for his captive people that initiated the "Return from Captivity" (Movement 9).

Daniel 9:17-19

*"Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. <sup>18</sup> Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.*

*<sup>19</sup> Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name."*

b. Biblical insight

Ezra 1:1

*In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:*

c. The decree of Cyrus

Ezra 1:2-4

*“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:*

*“The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. <sup>3</sup> Any of his people among you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them. <sup>4</sup> And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”*

- (1) The date of the decree was 538 BC.
- (2) The Persians conquered Babylon in 539 BC.
- (3) The decree is an evidence of the Persian lenience over conquered nations. Note the following comparison:

**Treatment By Ancient Conquerors**

* Assyrian Captivity .....	Deportation plus harsh treatment
* Babylonian Captivity .....	Deportation plus lenient treatment
* Persian Domination .....	Repatriation plus lenient treatment

d. The result

Ezra 1:5, 7

*Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites—everyone whose heart God had moved—prepared to go up and build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem...<sup>7</sup> Moreover, King Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god.*

**B. List of Returnees (Ezr 2)**

This chapter records the families that made the decision to return to the land. The list included notable leaders (2:2), family descendants (2:2-35), and of great interest, certain religious leaders—priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers, temple servants, and others. With plans to rebuild the temple, these religious leaders would be indispensable. Upon arrival, first steps for rebuilding the temple were initiated.

Ezra 2:68

*When they arrived at the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, some of the heads of the families gave freewill offerings toward the rebuilding of the house of God on its site.*

**VII. REBUILDING THE TEMPLE (Ezr 3-6)**

When a covenant people have returned to the land God promised to Father Abraham and his descendants, what should a repentant people do? The answer, of course, was to restore proper worship in a manner consistent with Mosaic Covenant stipulations. The First Temple (the glorious Temple of Solomon) had been destroyed. Now the challenge was to build the Second Temple.

## A. Initial Projects (3:1-13)

### 1. Rebuilding the altar (1-6)

After the return the Israelites began to settle throughout the land. On the seventh month (Tishri–Sept/Oct) the people gathered in Jerusalem to commence the project (1).

Ezra 3:2-3

*Then Joshua son of Jozadak and his fellow priests and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his associates began to build the altar of the God of Israel to sacrifice burnt offerings on it, in accordance with what is written in the Law of Moses the man of God.*

*<sup>3</sup> Despite their fear of the peoples around them, they built the altar on its foundation and sacrificed burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening sacrifices.*

- a. Joshua was a priestly leader (high priest; cf. Hag 1:1, 12, 14 et al.; in some translations, spelled Jeshua).
- b. Zerubbabel was a civil leader, a descendant of David and a later governor under Persian rule (cf. Hag 1:1; 2:2).
- c. Building the “altar of God” indicated a desire to resume sacrificial offerings in accordance with the Law of Moses. The altar was of first importance.

### **Insight:**

The seventh month was a highly religious month in the Israelite calendar. Three feasts or festivals occurred in this Hebrew month of Tishri: on the 1st, Feast of Trumpets; on the 10th, the Day of Atonement; on the 15th-21st, the Feast of Tabernacles.



Ezra 3:6

*On the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, though the foundation of the LORD'S temple had not yet been laid.*

## 2. Beginning the Temple (7-13)

In order to rebuild the appropriate materials were needed. As Solomon before had done, the Jewish returnees turned to the Phoenicians to supply wood for the temple (7).

Ezra 3:8

*In the second month of the second year after their arrival at the house of God in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jozadak and the rest of the people (the priests and the Levites and all who had returned from the captivity to Jerusalem) began the work. They appointed Levites twenty years old and older to supervise the building of the house of the LORD.*

Ezra 3:10-13

*When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments and with trumpets, and the Levites (the sons of Asaph) with cymbals, took their places to praise the LORD, as prescribed by David king of Israel. <sup>11</sup> With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the LORD: "He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever." And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.*

*<sup>12</sup> But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. <sup>13</sup> No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.*

- a. Completion of the foundation was accompanied by a celebration of praise.
- b. The pattern for this service of dedication mirrored that of David when he brought the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron 16:5-6).
- c. Seeing the foundations laid, the joy of some was in contrast to the weeping of others. The dimensions of the foundation foretold of a smaller, more modest temple than that of the splendor of Solomon's. The contemporary prophet, Haggai, would later write this to the Jewish people who saw this later, lesser temple.

Haggai 2:2-3

*"Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, <sup>3</sup> 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?"*

## **B. Opposition to the Project (4:1-24)**

Any noble enterprise that aims to honor and glorify the God of Heaven will bound to encounter opposition. In Ezra, the issue was external. In the Book of Haggai, the issues were internal, spiritual recalcitrance. Taken together, the resistance slowed the completion of the temple.

### **1. Personal opposition (1-5)**

- a. Phase #1: spurious offer to help

Ezra 4:3

*When the enemies of Judah and Benjamin heard that the exiles were building a temple for the LORD, the God of Israel, <sup>2</sup> they came to Zerubbabel and to the heads of the families and said, "Let us help you build because, like you, we seek your God and have been sacrificing to him since the time of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."*

- b. Reply #1: no part with us

Ezra 4:3

*But Zerubbabel, Joshua and the rest of the heads of the families of Israel answered, "You have no part with us in building a temple to our God. We alone will build it for the LORD, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus, the king of Persia, commanded us."*

- c. Phase #2: sowing discouragement

Ezra 4:4-5

*Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. <sup>5</sup> They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

2. Legal opposition (6-23):

This section is an editorial insert demonstrating that opposition to rebuilding the temple (or opposition to any worthy project for Yahweh's glory) is nothing new. It occurred during the later reign of Xerxes (Ahasuerus—ca 496-464 BC). Letters were sent to the king complaining about building projects in Jerusalem and criticizing the Jews as rebellious and the city as wicked. The king did in fact stop the projects but later during the time of Nehemiah this same king reversed his position and commissioned Nehemiah to return and rebuild the walls (defense and security) of Jerusalem.

3. Result of opposition (24)

After the editorial insertion and the out-of-chronological-time sequence, the story resumes concerning the rebuilding of the temple. And the effect of the opposition was devastating.

Ezra 4:24

*Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

- (a) The stoppage occurred in 536 BC.
- (b) Only the foundation has been completed.
- (c) Construction would not commence until 520 BC (16 years later).

**Insight** (W. Kaiser, *Toward an OT Theology*, 250)

Even when they [the restoration Jews] strove to again lay the foundations of that most important symbol of the presence of God, their sanctuary, discouragement took its toll; and the whole project came to a complete stop for sixteen long years (Ezra 4:24). Everything was wrong: they lacked the means then the inclination, and finally even the will to build the temple; for their every attempt met with constant opposition both from within the small group and from the outside (Ezra 3:12-13; 4:1-22). So it would have remained had not God graciously sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1).

**C. Delaying of the Project (5:1-17)**

The work stoppage ended with only the foundation of the temple completed. With the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the work recommenced in 520 BC after a delay of 16 years.

1. The work begins (again) (1-2)

Ezra 5:1-2

*Now Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the prophet, a descendant of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. <sup>2</sup> Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jozadak set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.*

2. The opposition resumes (again) (3-17)

The governor of the Persian region which included Jerusalem approached the Jews and questioned their authority to rebuild the temple.

a. The questioning by Tattenai (3-5)

The governor's main inquiry was simple, "who authorized you to rebuild this temple and restore this structure?" (3). Further, Tattenai demanded to know "the names of the men constructing this building" (4).

Ezra 5:5

*But the eye of their God was watching over the elders of the Jews, and they were not stopped until a report could go to Darius and his written reply be received.*

b. The letter sent to King Darius (6-17)

(1) The governor (Tattenai) related his questioning of the Jews (6-10)

- By what authority
- Give the names

(2) The Jews' reply included in the letter (11-19)

- We are servants of the God of heaven and earth (11)
- We are rebuilding the temple Nebuchadnezzar destroyed (because of our sin before our God) (12)
- We have authority to rebuild due to a decree of Cyrus (13-16)
- We also have a request:

Ezra 5:17

*Now if it pleases the king, let a search be made in the royal archives of Babylon to see if King Cyrus did in fact issue a decree to rebuild this house of God in Jerusalem. Then let the king send us his decision in this matter.*

<b>OPPOSITION TO TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION EZRA 4-5</b>			
Scripture	The form it took	What it tested	How they reacted
4:1-2 (cf. 2 Cor 6:14)	Israel's enemies offered to help.	Their wisdom	Zerubbabel declined the offer.
4:4-5 (cf. 2 Tim 1:7)	They discouraged and frightened the builders.	Their faith	The Jews trusted God and pressed on.
4:6-23 (cf. Matt 16:18)	They tried legal action and red tape.	Their patience	God gave a favorable decision through Artaxerxes, and Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews.
5:3 (cf. Matt 28:19-20)	They demanded proof of authority to build.	Their perseverance	The builders kept on working.
(** Taken from Constable, <i>Notes on Ezra</i> , 28)			

#### **D. Completion of the Project (6:1-22)**

1. Decree of Darius (1-12)
  - a. Darius orders a search (1-2)

Ezra 6:1-2

*King Darius then issued an order, and they searched in the archives stored in the treasury at Babylon. <sup>2</sup>A scroll was found in the citadel of Ecbatana in the province of Media, and this was written on it:*

b. Decree of Cyrus found (3-5)  
The found decree supported exactly what the Jews replied when questioned by Tattenai the governor.

c. Darius issues new orders (6-12)

(1) Do not interfere (6-7)

Ezra 6:7

*Now then, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and you other officials of that province, stay away from there. <sup>7</sup> Do not interfere with the work on this temple of God. Let the governor of the Jews and the Jewish elders rebuild this house of God on its site.*

(2) Do provide materially for the temple project (8-12)

Ezra 6:8<sup>b</sup>-10

*Their expenses are to be fully paid out of the royal treasury, from the revenues of Trans-Euphrates, so that the work will not stop. <sup>9</sup> Whatever is needed—young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and olive oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem—must be given them daily without fail, <sup>10</sup> so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons.*

Ezra 6:12

*May God, who has caused his Name to dwell there, overthrow any king or people who lifts a hand to change this decree or to destroy this temple in Jerusalem. I Darius have decreed it. Let it be carried out with diligence.*

## 2. Dedication of the Temple (6:13-18)

### a. The Temple was completed (13-15)

Note the following decisive factors that overcame opposition and provided the way to complete the project.

- (1) Darius issued a decree and Tattenai diligently carried it out (13).
- (2) Haggai and Zechariah's preaching aided in finishing the job (14).
- (3) Non-Jewish decrees paved the way (14).  
Note that Artaxerxes' decree comes later in the time of Nehemiah and the "wall project." The Biblical writer reminds the reader that God's sovereign hand has guided these leaders to accomplish God's greater purposes.  
Proverbs 21:1  
*In the LORD'S hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.*
- (4) The Temple was completed in 515 BC (though some scholars note 516 BC), some four years or so after resuming the delayed project.

### b. The Temple was dedicated

Ezra 6:16, 18

*Then the people of Israel—the priests, the Levites and the rest of the exiles—celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy...  
<sup>18</sup>And they installed the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is written in the Book of Moses.*

### c. Passover celebrated (19-22)

Ezra 6:19

*On the fourteenth day of the first month, the exiles celebrated the Passover.*



## VIII. SECOND RETURN TO JERUSALEM (chs 7-10)

### A. Proclamation (and Return) (7:1-28)

538-515 BC	483-473 BC	457 BC	444-425 BC
Zerubbabel	Esther	Ezra	Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10	Book of Nehemiah
First Return	In Persia	Second Return	Third Return

— Haggai (520 BC)

— Zechariah (520<sup>th</sup> BC)

— Malachi (ca 433-31 BC)

About 58 years separates Ezra 1-6 from 7-10 as seen in the above diagram. In the intervening time, the events of the Book of Esther have occurred (see Session 3: “The Book of Esther”). Also, there have been changes in the kings of Persia. Below is a helpful listing of the Persian kings (dates suggested by E. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 478).

- Cyrus II                      559-530 BC
- Cambyses II                 530-552
- Gaumata                    522
- Darius Hystaspes         522-486
- Xerxes                      486-465
- Artaxerxes I                464-424
- Darius II                    423-404
- Artaxerxes II              404-358

1. Ezra returns to Jerusalem (1-10)

Ezra returns under the reign of Artaxerxes I (464-424 BC). By listing his rather lengthy genealogy (credentials), the Biblical text highlights the importance of this man.

Note the following facts about Ezra:

- a. His impressive pedigree tracing back to Aaron, the first chief priest (1-5).
- b. His reputation as a scholar-teacher of the Law (6).
- c. His deep devotion to the Law (i.e. the Word of God).

Ezra 7:10

*For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.*

Note four principles of a Bible-centered believer.

For the serious student of the Word, note these steps:

- Commitment (devotion)
- Observation-Interpretation (study)
- Application (observance)
- Communication (teaching)

2. Ezra returns with Artaxerxes' letter (11-26)

- a. Prelude to the letter (11)
- b. Contents of the letter (12-26)

The letter (decree) is written in Aramaic, the official language of the Persian empire. The letter contains several important guarantees:

- (1) Jews who wish to return with Ezra may do so (12-13).
- (2) The king granted the right to take wealth, animals, produce, and all necessary to properly worship (sacrifice) at the temple of the God of Ezra/Jews in Jerusalem (14-20).

(3) The king instructed the treasurers of the Trans-Euphrates to also provide material support and not to tax those who ministered in the Temple (21-24).

(4) The king further instructed Ezra (25-26).

Ezra 7:25-26

*And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates—all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them. <sup>26</sup> Whoever does not obey the law of your God and the law of the king must surely be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment.*

3. Ezra's thanksgiving (27-28)

Ezra 7:27-28

*Praise be to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, who has put it into the king's heart to bring honor to the house of the LORD in Jerusalem in this way <sup>28</sup> and who has extended his good favor to me before the king and his advisers and all the king's powerful officials. Because the hand of the LORD my God was on me, I took courage and gathered leaders from Israel to go up with me.*

## **B. List of Returnees (8:1-36)**

1. Family heads who returned with Ezra (1-14)

2. Recruited Levites who returned with Ezra (15-20)

a. The problem (15)

Ezra 8:15

*I assembled them at the canal that flows toward Ahava, and we camped there three days. When I checked among the people and the priests, I found no Levites there.*

- b. The solution (16-20)  
 Finding no Levites in the returnees, Ezra summoned several key leaders to recruit Levites. Due to the recruitment efforts, some 38 Levites and 220 temple servants joined the returning peoples.
3. Spiritual preparation for the return with Ezra (21-23)  
 Ezra 8:21-23  
*There, by the Ahava Canal, I proclaimed a fast, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children, with all our possessions. <sup>22</sup> I was ashamed to ask the king for soldiers and horsemen to protect us from enemies on the road, because we had told the king, "The gracious hand of our God is on everyone who looks to him, but his great anger is against all who forsake him." <sup>23</sup> So we fasted and petitioned our God about this, and he answered our prayer.*
4. Delegation of responsibilities to leading priests (24-30)  
 The group returning with Ezra had in their possession the silver and gold, worship utensils and other articles needed for the temple. Ezra delegated the care and protection to key leaders.
5. Safe arrival of those who returned with Ezra (31-36)

### **C. Rebuilding the People (Ezr 9-10)**

1. Sin of the people (9:1-4)
  - a. Related (by the leaders) to Ezra (1-2)  
 Ezra 9:1-2  
*After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, "The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites,*

*Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. <sup>2</sup> They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness.”*

b. Response of Ezra (3-4)

Ezra 9:3-4

*When I heard this, I tore my tunic and cloak, pulled hair from my head and beard and sat down appalled. <sup>4</sup> Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel gathered around me because of this unfaithfulness of the exiles. And I sat there appalled until the evening sacrifice.*

c. Comments

- (1) Mosaic Law forbade Israelite marriages to Canaanites (Ex 34:11-16; Deut 7:1-5).
- (2) Ezra's response indicated outrage, indignation, anger, and grief. The moral (and legal) failure was of no small consequence.

2. The prayer of Ezra (9:5-15)

Around the time of the evening sacrifice (ca. 2:30-3:30pm), the grieving, humbled Ezra fell on his knees before God and prayed. The lengthy prayer included:

- **Confession** (6-7)... “ashamed and disgraced”... “our sins are higher than our heads and our guilt has reached to the heavens”
- **Gratitude** (8-9)... “God has been gracious”... “shown us kindness”
- **Acknowledgment** (10-12)... “we have disregarded the commands”... “do not give your daughters”
- **Resignation** (13-15)... “Here we are before you in our guilt... not one of us can stand in your presence”

3. The people's confession (10:1-6)

a. Ezra and the crowd (1)

Ezra 10:1

*While Ezra was praying and confessing, weeping and throwing himself down before the house of God, a large crowd of Israelites—men, women, and children—gathered around him. They too wept bitterly.*

b. Shecaniah and his proposal (2-4)

Ezra 10:3-4

*Now let us make a covenant before our God to send away all these women and their children, in accordance with the counsel of my lord and of those who fear the commands of our God. Let it be done according to the Law. <sup>4</sup> Rise up; this matter is in your hands. We will support you, so take courage and do it."*

c. Ezra and leaders' vow (5-6)

Ezra 10:5

*So Ezra rose up and put the leading priests and Levites and all Israel under oath to do what had been suggested. And they took the oath.*

4. Proclamation issued (10:7-17)

a. All exiles were required to assemble in Jerusalem within 3 days (7-8).

b. Ezra addressed the assembly:

- "You have been unfaithful" (10).
- "You have married foreign women" (10).
- "you must confess your sins" (11).
- "You must separate from your foreign wives" (11).

c. People's response was agreement (12-17).

5. Guilty listed (10:18-44)

A list of some 113 Israelite men had married and now divorced their wives. Their sin of disobedience would not only affect them but others as well.

Constable notes, “This reformation resulted in the continued racial, and more significantly, spiritual purity of Abraham’s descendants for another generation. However, Nehemiah faced the problem of mixed marriages again only a few years later (Neh 10:30; 13:23) (*Notes on Ezra*, 43).

### **“Historical and Theological Overview”**

- The Jews in exile had returned from their deportation and captivity (deportation and defeat because of sin).
- Certain Jews had intermarried with foreign wives (forbidden in the Law of Moses).
- The rebellious attitude that had led to the captivity could now lead to further problems (and divine discipline).
- God cannot bless rebellion without repentance (confession precedes restoration and blessing).
- Disobedience to the Law carries divine consequences (Deut 28).
- Therefore, an extreme remedy was needed for an extreme situation.

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

### **A. Confession**

Confession of national/personal sin (cf. Dan 9) led to the return from exile. Confession and repentance always precedes restoration and blessing.

### **B. Zerubbabel’s Call**

God raised up the man Zerubbabel to begin the process of rebuilding the temple. When God purposes to accomplish something, He often uses people to effect His will. E.M. Bounds was quoted as saying, “men (i.e. people) are God’s method.”

### **C. Ezra’s Call**

God will raise up Ezra to rebuild the people by the recovery and teaching of the Word of God.

Ezra 7:10

*For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.*

Psalm 119:33-34 (tradition asserts Ezra as author of Ps 119)  
*Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. <sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart.*

Psalm 119:165-68

*Great peace have those who love your law,  
and nothing can make them stumble.*

<sup>166</sup> *I wait for your salvation, LORD,  
and I follow your commands.*

<sup>167</sup> *I obey your statutes,  
for I love them greatly.*

<sup>168</sup> *I obey your precepts and your statutes,  
for all my ways are known to you.*



# SESSION 2

## The Book of Nehemiah

### I. PRAYER/REVIEW

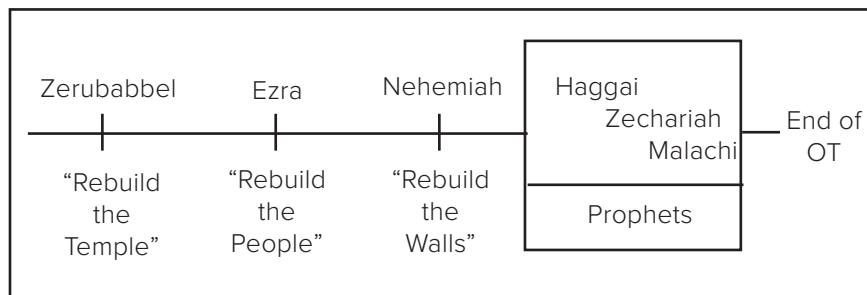
### II. INTER-RELATIONSHIPS OF THE POST-EXILIC SCRIPTURE (BOOKS)

538-535 BC	483-473 BC	457 BC	444-425 BC
Zerubbabel	Esther	Ezra	Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10	Book of Nehemiah
First Return	In Persia	Second Return	Third Return

Haggai (520 BC)  
Zechariah (520<sup>ff</sup> BC)

Malachi  
(ca 433-31 BC)

### III. MOVEMENT 9: The Return from Exile



## **IV. BOOK OF NEHEMIAH**

### **A. Author**

Some scholars believe that Ezra-Nehemiah was originally one book (see “Interrelatedness of Ezra-Nehemiah,” p. 10). If this is true (and it is reasonable to think so), then the question of authorship of either Ezra or Nehemiah is difficult to determine.

But the internal evidence (cf. first person account in Ezra 7:28-9:15) strongly points to Ezra as writer and the “I” - “we” sections of Nehemiah convey a firsthand account of that book. Likely, Ezra and Nehemiah wrote their books attributed to them, but an inspired editor(s) may have made some additions that linked the books together. Thus, Ezra—Nehemiah could be considered one book.

The view of this study is that Nehemiah was inspired by the Spirit to record the Book of Nehemiah (cf 2 Pet 1:20-21; 2 Tim 3:16) and his work may have been augmented by an equally inspired compiler-editor.

### **B. Theme of Nehemiah**

While the Book of Ezra focused upon the religious restoration of the people and specifically the rebuilding of the Temple, Nehemiah faced a different challenge. The walls of the ancient city were in ruin and rubble and the political climate was tense (thus the opposition to rebuilding the walls).

Nehemiah (the book) demonstrates the providential, guiding hand of God leading to Jerusalem’s restoration. It emphasizes the crucial need for and abundant practice of prayer. The book completes the return from exile and brings to a close the Ezra-Nehemiah saga.

### **C. Date**

The Ezra-Nehemiah story unfolds over a period of some 110 years (538 BC-430 BC). The first two-thirds is covered by the Book of Ezra, the latter one-third by the Book of Nehemiah. Refer to “III, Chronological Setting,” p. 9.

## D. Book of Nehemiah

### 1. Charted

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH					
Construction			Consolidation		
Physical Focus	:	Walls to be Built	Spiritual Focus	:	Worship to be Restored
Preparation to Build			Census of Returnees		
1		3			7
Opposition to Build			Covenant Renewal		
From Without	:	From Within			
4		5	8		10
Wall Completed			Re-Assignment of Residents		
52 days (Neh 7:1)			11		12
			Dedication and Reform		
			12		13
Chapters 1-6			Chapters 7-13		

### 2. Outlined: **Book of Nehemiah**

The outline is based upon the previous chart. This broad outline provides the structure for the Biblical Development section that follows.

- I. PREPARATION TO BUILD (ch 1-3)**
  - A. Return Under Nehemiah (ch 1-2)
  - B. Rebuilding the Walls (ch 3)
- II. OPPOSITION TO REBUILDING (ch 4-6)**
  - A. From Without (ch 4)
  - B. From Within (ch 5)
  - C. From Without (ch 6)
- III. CENSUS OF RETURNEES (ch 7)**
  - A. Wall Completed : Instructions (7:1-3)
  - B. Records Consulted : First Returnees (7:4-73)
- IV. COVENANT RENEWAL (ch 8-10)**
  - A. Ezra Reads the Law (ch 8)
  - B. Israelites Confess their Sins (ch 9)
  - C. Israelites Renew their Covenant (ch 10)
    - 1. Signatories (1-27)
    - 2. Stipulations (28-39)
- V. REASSIGNMENT OF RESIDENTS (ch 11-12)**
  - A. People Resettled (ch 11)
  - B. Priests and Levites Registered (12:1-26)
- VI. DEDICATION AND REFORM (12-13)**
  - A. Dedication of the Wall (12:27-47)
  - B. Reformation of the People (ch 13)

## V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT

The Biblical exposition of the Book of Nehemiah will follow the broad outline as given above. The student will need to periodically return to the Chart of Nehemiah as well as the outline. The exposition follows.

### A. Preparation to Build (Neh 1-3)

The Biblical text of the first seven chapters of Nehemiah are written in the first person (as also 12:31-13:31). These have been called the Nehemiah Memoirs, a first-hand account of leadership challenges and struggles.

#### 1. Return under Nehemiah (1:1-2:20)

##### a. Report (1:1-3)

Nehemiah was in the citadel of Susa during the Hebrew month of Kislev (Nov-Dec) in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (around 445 BC). His brother and others had returned from Judah, and Nehemiah inquired about “the Jewish remnant” and “about Jerusalem.” The reply was disturbing.

Nehemiah 1:3

*They said to me, “Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire.”*

##### b. Response (1:4-11)

Upon hearing the sad news, Nehemiah did five things: (1) he “sat down” (2) he “wept” (3) he “mourned” (4) he “fasted” (5) he “prayed” (v. 4).

There are at least ten prayers mentioned in the Book of Nehemiah (1:5-11; 2:4; 4:4-5; 5:19; 6:9; 6:14; 13:14; 13:22; 13:29; 13:31). This obvious reliance upon prayer is a distinctive of the man and of the book. Note other significant references to prayer as follows:

- Philippians 4:6-7 (pray when distressed)  
*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
- 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (pray for those in authority)  
*I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— <sup>2</sup> for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. (Nehemiah will embody these two prayer passages to his own life situation.)*

Nehemiah's prayer (1:5-11<sup>a</sup>) can be structured in the following way.

- (1) Adoration (5)
  - "great and awesome God"
  - (who) "keeps his covenant of love"
- (2) Plea (6<sup>a</sup>)
  - "let your ear be attentive"
  - (let) "your eyes be open to hear"
- (3) Confession (6<sup>b</sup>-7)
  - "sins... committed against you"
  - "acted very wickedly"
  - "not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave"
- (4) Petition: remember (8-9)  
Nehemiah 1:8-9  
*"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, <sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'"*

(5) Petition: grant success (10-11<sup>a</sup>)

Nehemiah ends his prayer asking for God's help ("grant your servant success") with a particularly strategic man (i.e. the king).

Nehemiah's prayer concluded requesting aid with a particular man. The last part of verse 11 explains the reason.

"Now I was cupbearer to the king" (1:11<sup>b</sup>).

**Insight:**

In ancient times the office of cupbearer was far more than a simple butler or table servant. Constable (*Notes on Nehemiah*, 9) writes, "Nehemiah was not only the chief treasurer and keeper of the king's signet ring, but he also tasted the king's food to make sure no one had poisoned it." The role was akin to personal adviser, one with frequent access to the ear of the king. Even so, no one entered the monarch's presence lightly or in a cavalier fashion. Nehemiah must be most careful, especially in light of what he wishes to ask of the king.

c. Request (2:1-8)

Four months passed from Nehemiah's prayers (chapter 1) to the encounter with the king (in chapter 2). The king had noticed that Nehemiah was "sad in his presence," a potentially volatile condition. Sadness could be interpreted as displeasure with the king. But bolstered by his previous prayers, the cupbearer boldly yet humbly replied to the king.

Nehemiah 2:2<sup>b</sup>-3

*I was very much afraid, <sup>3</sup> but I said to the king, “May the king live forever! Why should my face not look sad when the city where my ancestors are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?”*

- (1) The king’s question  
“what is it you want?” (4<sup>a</sup>)
- (2) The cupbearer’s response (4<sup>b</sup>)  
“Then I prayed to the God of heaven...”
- (3) The cupbearer’s desire (5)

Nehemiah 2:5

*...and I answered the king, “If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it.”*

- (4) The cupbearer’s request (6-8)  
With boldness generated by his prayers, Nehemiah made the following requests:
  - to be sent to his home to rebuild it
  - to receive official letters from the king to insure safe conduct
  - to be given the king’s authority to take needed resources from the king’s realm to rebuild the walls

**Insight:**

On the surface, what Nehemiah requested may seem audacious. But after asking how long Nehemiah would be gone, the king amazingly granted each of his requests. But was this reply to be attributed to the cupbearer’s privileged position? His deferential charm? His skillful negotiating acumen? The Biblical text reveals what Nehemiah thought. *“And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests”* (Neh 2:8<sup>b</sup>).



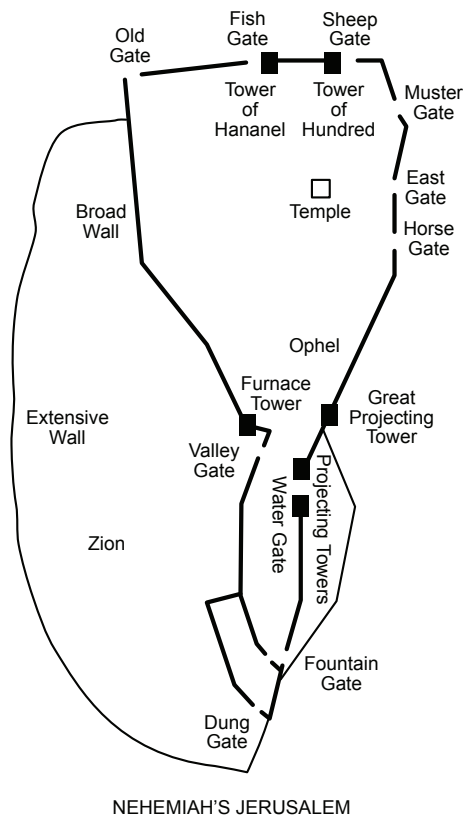
d. Return (2:9-20)

Nehemiah departed with his official letters as well as a military escort (9).

(1) Inspection (10-16)

Quietly Nehemiah went at night to assess the situation concerning the broken walls. He did not inform anyone of what “God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem” (12). The reason for the secrecy was to avoid potential conflict if Israel’s enemies (antagonists) observed what he was doing. Once he did openly share his plans to rebuild the walls, the opposition certainly began.

For a geographical look at Nehemiah’s night time survey, note the map which follows (from Constable, 12).



(2) Exhortation (17-18)

Nehemiah 2:17-18

*Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins, and its gates have been burned with fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, and we will no longer be in disgrace." <sup>18</sup> I also told them about the gracious hand of my God on me and what the king had said to me. They replied, "Let us start rebuilding." So they began this good work.*

**Recruiting to a Vision**

Step One: Assessment (gather the facts)

Step Two: Need (clarified/personalized)

Step Three: Challenge (to collective action)

Step Four: Resources (God's favor)

Nehemiah skillfully cast a vision before a discouraged, uninvolved remnant. This vision would subsequently be challenged, but it was never quenched.

(3) Opposition (19-20)

Nehemiah 2:19-20

*But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arab heard about it, they mocked and ridiculed us. "What is this you are doing?" they asked. "Are you rebelling against the king?" <sup>20</sup> I answered them by saying, "The God of heaven will give us success. We his servants will start rebuilding, but as for you, you have no share in Jerusalem or any claim or historic right to it."*

Note the opposition's strategy:

- mockery and ridicule
- slander ("rebellling against the king")

## 2. Rebuilding the walls (3:1-32)

The challenge before Nehemiah was daunting; the task was overwhelming and the opposition unrelenting. To accomplish the project would require exceptional leadership, strategic planning and most importantly, motivated workers.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the work assignments, both where the repair work was assigned and who was responsible for that section of the walls.

The first listed assignments regarded the gates around the city. The following chart captures the work responsibilities (see also the map on p. 37).

THE WALL PROJECT (Neh 3)		
Reference	Gate	Assignment
(3:1-2)	Sheep	Eliashib the high priest (and others)
(3:3-5)	Fish	Sons of Hassenaah
(3:6-12)	Jeshanah (Old)	Joiada and Meshullam (and others)
(3:13)	Valley	Hanun and residents of Zanoah
(3:14)	Dung	Malkijah (son of Recab)
(3:15-16)	Fountain	Shallun
(3:26-27)	Water	Temple servants
(3:28-30)	Horse	Various priests
(3:31-32)	Inspection	Malkijah the goldsmith

One of the noteworthy observations in Nehemiah 3 is the frequency of the phrase “next to him” (“beyond them” and others). The NIV 84 translation uses the phrase (or similar ones) close to 30 times. The idea is one of cooperation, responsibility, division of labor, unified teamwork, strategic planning and so forth. What Nehemiah could not do alone could be accomplished only if the people caught the vision and worked the plan. (God’s hidden hand of guidance and strength must also be acknowledged).

## **B. Opposition to Rebuilding (4:1-6:19)**

1. Opposition from Without (4:1-23)
  - a. By mockery (1-6)

Nehemiah 4:1-3

*When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, <sup>2</sup> and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” <sup>3</sup> Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”*

No one should have been surprised at the hostility directed toward those attempting to rebuild the walls. Whenever one attempts to do great things for God, inevitably there will be opposition. Ultimately, the Enemy of our souls will use whatever devices or persons (e.g. Sanballat, Tobiah, et al.) he can to counter God’s good work. As Warren Wiersbe has noted, “If you start building you will soon be battling; so be prepared!” (quoted by Constable, 16).

How one responds to criticism or derision is a measure of maturity. Nehemiah did not directly reply to his critics. His first response was prayer.

Nehemiah 4:4-5

*Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. <sup>5</sup> Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.*

Scathing criticism could in some cases cause a devastating work stoppage. Not so with the motivated Israelites.

Nehemiah 4:6

*So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.*

b. By imminent threat (7-23)

Nehemiah 4:7-8

*But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup> They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.*

The threat was real. The opposition to the project was very real. The progress on the wall was impressive, even to the point of being half-finished (6). But this new danger threatened not only the work itself, but the workers. Once again, Nehemiah and the people prayed.

Nehemiah 4:9

*But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.*

Yet notice that not only did Nehemiah lead the people to pray but with wisdom and prudence he posted a guard to defend the workers. Prayer alone could be presumptive upon God's will; posting guards only would have been faithless. The dual action of both was faith that works (or in this case, watches!)

**Insight:**

Donald Campbell (39) relates the following story about D.L. Moody.

On one of D.L. Moody's trips across the Atlantic, a fire broke out in the hold of the ship. Moody and a friend joined the crew and other volunteers passing buckets of water to be thrown on the fire. The friend said to Moody, "Mr. Moody, let us go to the other end of the ship and pray." The common-sense evangelist replied, "no sir; we stand right here and pass buckets and pray hard all the time!"

The imminent threat revealed a level of discouragement in the Israelite camp.

- People in Judah (10): "strength of the laborers is giving out"... "so much rubble"... "we cannot rebuild the wall."
- Enemies (11): "will kill them"... "put an end to their work."
- Jews nearby (12): "wherever you turn they will attack us."

Nehemiah faced the threat by strategically posting armed guards at vulnerable spots along the walls. He encouraged the Israelites.

Nehemiah 4:14-15

*After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for*

*your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”<sup>15</sup> When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.*

To confront this looming danger Nehemiah organized and instructed the people how to respond to real attacks. He reminded the people, “Our God will fight for us!” (20<sup>b</sup>).

## 2. Opposition from Within (5:1-19)

The most dangerous of oppositions may not be from without, but perhaps from within. The New Testament warns of such internal strife.

*James 3:16*

*For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.*

*Galatians 5:14-15*

*For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>15</sup> If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.*

### a. Complaint (1-5)

*Nehemiah 5:1-5*

*Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews.<sup>2</sup> Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.”<sup>3</sup> Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.”<sup>4</sup> Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards.<sup>5</sup> Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”*



Walls in shambles was not the only problem in Jerusalem. The destitute and poor were being ignored (or abused) by their wealthier brothers. While they likely professed a love for God, there was a sad, discernible lack of love for their Israelite brethren. It was a blatant disregard of social responsibility and ignoring of basic Jewish teaching. In this regard, Jesus had keen insight.

Matthew 22:34-39

*Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: <sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ <sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”*

b. Condemnation (6-13)

Nehemiah 5:6-8

*When I heard their outcry and these charges, I was very angry. <sup>7</sup> I pondered them in my mind and then accused the nobles and officials. I told them, “You are charging your own people interest!” So I called together a large meeting to deal with them <sup>8</sup> and said: “As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!” They kept quiet, because they could find nothing to say.*

When faced with such injustice, Nehemiah confronted the offenders. “What you are doing is not right!” (9). He charged them all with redressing the wrongs committed against their own people. The nobles and officials agreed to right the wrong and the injustice was righted.

c. Conduct (14-19)

Nehemiah was appointed governor in the land of Judah (14) and ruled fairly and equitably.

Nehemiah 5:15-16

*But the earlier governors—those preceding me—placed a heavy burden on the people and took forty shekels of silver from them in addition to food and wine. Their assistants also lorded it over the people. But out of reverence for God I did not act like that. <sup>16</sup> Instead, I devoted myself to the work on this wall. All my men were assembled there for the work; we did not acquire any land.*

**Insight:**

Chapter 5 (detailing opposition from within) ends with Nehemiah's sincere prayer.

*"Remember me with favor, O My God, for all I have done for these people" (5:19).*

3. From without (6:1-14)

Without question Nehemiah is a prime example of leadership under crisis. Already the (now) governor (5:14) has faced external opposition (ch 4) and internal strife (ch 5). Now the threat re-emerges with Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem and others.

a. Strategy one: distract Nehemiah (1-4)

Progress on the walls had impressively made great strides. The gates had yet to be set, but were nearing completion. The old nemeses (Sanballat, Tobiah and a new opposer, Geshem the Arab) set out again to foil the attempt to complete the project. A message was sent to Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 6:2-3

*Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: "Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono." But they were scheming to harm me; <sup>3</sup> so I sent messengers to them with this reply: "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?"*

The plain of Ono was about 25 miles west/northwest of Jerusalem. The journey alone would take 1-2 days to arrive, then meet, then return. The ruse would take Nehemiah, the acknowledged inspirational leader, away from rebuilding the walls. It would allow opportunity for attack without the governor present. (It also presented a unique opportunity to assassinate Nehemiah).

Nehemiah's reply clearly indicated that he was otherwise engaged in a much more important project. Four times the schemers sent the message but each time Nehemiah refused.

**Insight (leadership):**

Nehemiah's vision was a Jerusalem with rebuilt walls, restored national honor and political security from local, regional enemies. His mission was clear. Rebuild with haste the walls. But often leaders are faced with distractions that try to obscure the clear mission and vision. Wise leaders today echo Nehemiah's sense of purpose, *"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot (will not) come down"* (6:3 ASV - parenthesis added).

b. Strategy two: discredit Nehemiah (5-9)

The fifth time Sanballat sent a messenger to Nehemiah, he also delivered an "unsealed" letter. Such a letter could be (probably would be) opened, read and in rumor-like fashion spread about. The contents of this "divisive"

letter challenged Nehemiah's integrity and credibility.

Nehemiah 6:6-7

*...“It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king<sup>7</sup> and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”*

The governor's reply dismissed the innuendo generated by the unsealed letter as something Sanballat was “just making it up out of your head” (8).

Nehemiah 6:9

*They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”*

c. Strategy three: deceive Nehemiah (10-14)

The third attempt to stop Nehemiah involved a prophecy related to Nehemiah by Shemaiah (who was no doubt in collusion with Tobiah and Sanballat - cf. 6:14). The prophet indicated that the governor's life was in danger and that the two of them should meet inside the Temple and close the doors (10).

The obviously false prophecy erred in at least two significant ways:

- (1) Why would God halt the necessary, time-sensitive work on the walls?
- (2) Why would God lead Nehemiah, a non-Levite, to enter a place forbidden by Jewish law to enter (cf. Num 1:51; 3:10; 18:7)?

Nehemiah responded clearly.

Nehemiah 6:11-13

*But I said, "Should a man like me run away? Or should someone like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go!" <sup>12</sup> I realized that God had not sent him, but that he had prophesied against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. <sup>13</sup> He had been hired to intimidate me so that I would commit a sin by doing this, and then they would give me a bad name to discredit me.*

Nehemiah 6:14

*Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, my God, because of what they have done; remember also the prophet Noadiah and how she and the rest of the prophets have been trying to intimidate me.*

#### 4. Summary

Nehemiah 6:15-16

*So the wall was completed on the twenty-fifth of Elul, in fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup> When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and lost their self-confidence, because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God.*

### **C. Census of Returnees (7:1-73)**

#### 1. Walls completed: instructions (1-3)

Nehemiah 7:1-3

*After the wall had been rebuilt and I had set the doors in place, the gatekeepers, the musicians and the Levites were appointed. <sup>2</sup> I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most people do. <sup>3</sup> I said to them, "The gates of Jerusalem are not to be opened until the sun is hot. While the gatekeepers are still on duty, have them shut the doors and bar them. Also appoint residents of Jerusalem as guards, some at their posts and some near their own houses."*

2. Records consulted: First returnees (4-71)

Observations:

- a. The list is not of those who returned with Nehemiah (444 BC) but those who came with Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, and Jeshua (ca 537 BC). The list is nearly identical to Ezra 2.
- b. The list comprises earlier returnees who had proper lineage and would be encouraged to move back to Jerusalem (cf 11:1-2).
- c. The list includes:
  - (1) Leaders (7)
  - (2) People by families (8-25)
  - (3) People by cities (26-38)
  - (4) Religious leaders (priests) (39-42)
  - (5) Levites (others) (43-45)
  - (6) Temple servants (46-56)
  - (7) Descendants of Solomon's servants (57-60)
  - (8) Returnees of questionable pure descent (61-65)
  - (9) Totals of people, animals and gifts (66-72)

**D. Covenant Renewal (8:1-10:39)**

These three chapters can be summarized as follows:

- Chapter 8 ..... Scripture exposition (reading)
- Chapter 9 ..... Confession (repentance)
- Chapter 10 ..... Commitment (resolve)

Note that these sections of Nehemiah will follow a general outline punctuated by key Biblical texts.

1. Ezra reads the Law (8:1-18)

Nehemiah 8:2-3

*So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest **brought the Law** before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. <sup>3</sup> **He read it aloud** from*

daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the **people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.**

Nehemiah 8:5-6

**Ezra opened the book.** All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. <sup>6</sup> Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Nehemiah 8:8-10

**They read from the Book of the Law of God,** making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. <sup>9</sup> Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. <sup>10</sup> Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our LORD. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Nehemiah 8:18

Day after day, from the first day to the last, **Ezra read from the Book of the Law of God.** They celebrated the festival for seven days, and on the eighth day, in accordance with the regulation, there was an assembly.

2. Israelites confess their sins (9:1-38)

Nehemiah 9:1-3 (confession)

On the twenty-fourth day of the same month, the Israelites gathered together, fasting and wearing sackcloth and putting dust on their heads. <sup>2</sup> Those of Israelite descent had separated themselves from all foreigners. They stood in their places

and **confessed their sins and the sins of their ancestors.** <sup>3</sup> They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter **in confession** and in worshiping the LORD their God.

Nehemiah 9:5<sup>b</sup>-6 (prayer)

*“Stand up and praise the LORD your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting.” “Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. <sup>6</sup> You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*

**Insight:**

The prayer comprises most of chapter 9. It is similar to Psalms 78, 105, 106, 135, 136. The prayer traces Israel’s history, acknowledges the sin and failures of God’s people and praises God for nonetheless keeping faithful to His covenant promises. This sets the stage for the covenant renewal which follows.

3. Israelites renew their covenant (10:1-39)

a. Signatories (1-27)

Nehemiah 9:38

*“In view of all this, we are making a binding agreement, putting it in writing, and our leaders, our Levites and our priests are affixing their seals to it.”*

What follows in 10:1-27 is a listing of those who signed and ratified this renewed covenant.

b. Stipulations (28-39)

Following the example of the leaders, the people recommit to adherence to Mosaic Law (Covenant). Highlighted areas of covenantal promise were outlined:



- (1) General obedience to the Law (28-29)
- (2) No inter-marriage (30)
- (3) Keeping the Sabbath (31)
- (4) Temple tax (32-33)
- (5) Priestly obligations (34)
- (6) First fruits to God (35-37<sup>a</sup>)
- (7) Tithes (37<sup>b</sup>-39)

#### **E. Reassignment of Residents (11:1-12; 26)**

- 1. People resettled (11:1-36)

Eugene Merrill (*NOTS*, 361) summarizes the measures taken to repopulate Jerusalem.

A shortage of residents in Jerusalem seems apparent in the need to guarantee that at least 10 percent of the total population would live there, and Nehemiah had already explicitly mentioned the problem (7:4-5). A list now follows of those who willingly moved into the city (11:2), as well as those who did so more under compulsion (11:3-24). Also appended is a list of the villages in which both citizens and religious personnel took up residence (11:25-36).

- 2. Priests and Levites registered (12:1-26)

The ultimate goal of the Israelites was not simply to return to the land or even to rebuild the walls, however important that was. The need was to re-establish worship in the recently built Second Temple within the confines of the recently rebuilt walls. To worship properly required an authentic, qualified priestly caste.

#### **F. Dedication and Reform (12:27-13:31)**

- 1. Dedication (12:27-47)
  - a. Preparations (27-30)

Nehemiah 12:27-30

*At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres. <sup>28</sup> The musicians also were brought together from the region around Jerusalem—from the villages of the Netophathites, <sup>29</sup> from Beth Gilgal, and from the area of Geba and Azmaveth, for the musicians had built villages for themselves around Jerusalem. <sup>30</sup> When the priests and Levites had purified themselves ceremonially, they purified the people, the gates and the wall.*

b. Ceremony (31-47)

Two choirs marched in different directions around the refurbished walls and gates (31-39). Each of the choirs (presumably) sang and gave thanks meeting eventually at the Temple.

Nehemiah 12:43

*And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.*

The Temple worship was re-established (even as King David had so organized it—12:44-47). Israel was back in the land after the seventy-year captivity. The Temple had been rebuilt, the people revived, the walls repaired, and appropriate worship reinstituted.

2. Reform (13:1-31)

Nehemiah was apparently required to return to the king for a time. In the interim the spiritual condition of the Israelites deteriorated badly. Upon his return Nehemiah instituted certain reforms concerning the Temple, neglect of the Levites, practices on the Sabbath, and marital reform.

Also, note 4 times in the Book of Nehemiah, his prayer asking God to remember his service.

Nehemiah 13:14

*Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.*

Nehemiah 13:22<sup>b</sup>

*Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy. Remember me for this also, my God, and show mercy to me according to your great love.*

Nehemiah 13:29

*Remember them, my God, because they defiled the priestly office and the covenant of the priesthood and of the Levites.*

Nehemiah 13:31<sup>b</sup>

*I also made provision for contributions of wood at designated times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me with favor, my God.*

## VI. POINTS TO PONDER

### A. Nehemiah and Leadership Principles

Consider the following list by Donald Campbell (23) of twenty-one principles for effective leadership demonstrated by the leader, Nehemiah. Which two or three most closely resonates with you?

- (1) He established a reasonable and attainable goal.
- (2) He had a sense of mission.
- (3) He was willing to get involved.
- (4) He rearranged his priorities in order to accomplish his goal.
- (5) He patiently waited for God's timing.
- (6) He showed respect to his superior.
- (7) He prayed at crucial times.
- (8) He made his request with tact and graciousness.

- (9) He was well prepared and thought of his needs in advance.
- (10) He went through the proper channels.
- (11) He took time (three days) to rest, pray, and plan.
- (12) He investigated the situation firsthand.
- (13) He informed others only after he knew the size of the problem.
- (14) He identified himself as one with the people.
- (15) He set before them a reasonable and attainable goal.
- (16) He assured them God was in the project.
- (17) He displayed self-confidence in facing obstacles.
- (18) He displayed God's confidence in facing obstacles.
- (19) He did not argue with opponents.
- (20) He was not discouraged by opposition.
- (21) He courageously used the authority of his position.

## B. Nehemiah and Prayer

Consider the frequent mention of Nehemiah's prayers even as he was rebuilding the walls. Prayer (dependence on God) and effort (work of man) go hand in hand. Consider the following verses.

1. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18  
*Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> **pray continually**, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*
2. Philippians 4:6-7  
*Do not be anxious about anything, **but in every situation, by prayer and petition**, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.  
<sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

# SESSION 3

## The Book of Esther

### I. PRAYER

### II. CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING

538-515 BC		483-473 BC		457 BC		444-425 BC
Zerubbabel		Esther		Ezra		Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6		Book of Esther		Ezra 7-10		Book of Nehemiah
First Return		In Persia		Second Return		Third Return

Haggai (520 BC)

Zechariah (520<sup>ff</sup> BC)

Malachi (ca 433-31 BC)

### III. PANORAMA MOVEMENT 9: BIBLICAL BOOKS

The “Return from Exile” period of Jewish history is described in six canonical books of the Old Testament. Note the following chart.

RETURN FROM EXILE		
Book	Genre	Basic Theme
Ezra	Narrative	Return to Rebuild the Temple
Nehemiah	Narrative	Return to Rebuild the Walls
Esther	Narrative	Deliverance and Feast of Purim
Haggai	Prophetic	Exhortation: Rebuild the Temple
Zechariah	Prophetic	Temple and Future Messianic Times
Malachi	Prophetic	Covenant Renewal and Elijah Figure

## IV. BOOK OF ESTHER

### A. Author

The writer of Esther is anonymous. That the person was well acquainted with Persian culture is evident in 2:23 (“book of the annals,” a Persian source) and 10:2 (“book of the annals of the kings of Media and Persia”). The author clearly was a Jew with Jewish nationalism and establishment of a Jewish feast prominent. It would be unlikely for a woman to have authored the book in the cultural milieu of the day, thus Esther would certainly not be a reasonable candidate. The writer distinguishes himself from Mordecai (9:20, 23), thus Mordecai can also be eliminated. Therefore, the best that can be said was that the author was an anonymous, Spirit-inspired (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21) writer.

### B. Theme

The book has two primary themes. First, it records God’s providential hand in sparing His covenant people from a diabolical plot to exterminate them throughout the kingdom of Persia (the modern reader can relate and apply this attempt at genocide to the “final solution” devised by Nazi Germany in the Second World War).

Second, the Book of Esther provides the historical details that led to the establishment of the Feast of Purim, an annual religious holiday celebrated to this day by modern Jews.

### C. Historical Dates Related to Esther

Note the following chart by T. Constable (*Notes on Esther*, 3). These dates (BC) correlate to key events in the Book of Esther. Also, note that “Ahasuerus” is the Hebrew name for Xerxes.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER	
483	Ahasuerus’ military planning session in Susa
482	The deposition of Vashti
481	The beginning of Ahasuerus’ unsuccessful expedition against Greece
480	Esther’s arrival in Susa
479	Ahasuerus’ return to Susa Esther’s coronation
478	
477	
476	
475	
474	The issuing of Ahasuerus’ decrees affecting the Jews
473	The Jew’s defense of themselves The establishment of the Feast of Purim

#### **D. Distinctives**

1. The name of God is not found within the ten chapters of this book (similar to the Song of Solomon where it occurs only once—SS 8:6).
2. The book is never quoted even once in the New Testament.
3. The book was not found at the ancient ruins of the Qumran community where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found.
4. The book (like that of Ruth) is one of two Biblical books that bear the name of a woman as its title. One writer has noted, “Ruth was Gentile woman who married a Jew, Esther was Jewish woman who married a Gentile” (J. Phillips as quoted by I. Jensen, *JSOT*, 242).
5. The book does not contain a single recorded prayer though fasting is described (cf. 4:1-3).
6. The major Jewish personalities (Mordecai and Esther) do not overtly evidence any sense of spiritual awareness (though Mordecai will later tear his clothing, wail, and fast).
7. The book does not appeal to God’s “hesed” (loving-kindness or loyalty-love), compassion, or forgiveness. Spiritual issues appear to be beneath the surface as the external, public, deadly persecution takes center stage.
8. Key words in the book are “banquet” (or feast) which occurs about 11 times and “Jews” which occurs over 50 times.

#### **E. Chiastic Structure of “Esther”**

- A Prologue and Introduction (1)
- B King’s First Decree (2-3)
  - C Clash of Haman and Mordecai (4-5)
  - D King Could Not Sleep (6:1)
  - C’ Triumph of Mordecai over Haman (6-7)
- B’ King’s Second Decree (8-9)
- A’ Epilogue and Conclusion (10)



## F. Chart of “Esther”

Note the following chart (adapted from Cupp, *Panorama of the Bible*, 2011 edition, 202).

ESTHER			
Drama and Crisis		Deliverance and Conclusion	
1	Divorce and Discovery (Vashti and Esther)	6	Destiny of Haman
2		7	
3	Decree of Haman	8	Decree of the King
4	Decision of Mordecai	9	Destruction of Enemies
5	Dinner with the King (Esther vs Haman)	10	Details about Mordecai
Chapters 1-5		Chapters 6-10	

This chart will provide the structural arrangement of the next section, V. Biblical Development.

## V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT

### A. Drama and Crisis (1:1-5:14)

The Book of Esther relates the story of the Jews living in Persia who chose not to return from the seventy-year exile. It is a tale of high drama, intrigue, plotting, and counter plotting. The story highlights what today we would call anti-Semitism. S. Ellison (114) notes, “Anti-Semitism is a form of prejudice against Jews, ranging from antipathy to violent hatred... Being anti-Semitic differs from being anti-Jewish in that it (anti-Semitism) is an irrational prejudice against the race, not just against what they do (anti-Jewish).”

The Biblical story of Esther initially involves a story of two queens.

1. Divorce and Discovery (Vashti and Esther) (1:1-2:23)
  - a. Vashti deposed: no longer queen (1:1-22)
    - (1) Setting: the King's banquet (1:1-8)

Esther 1:1-4

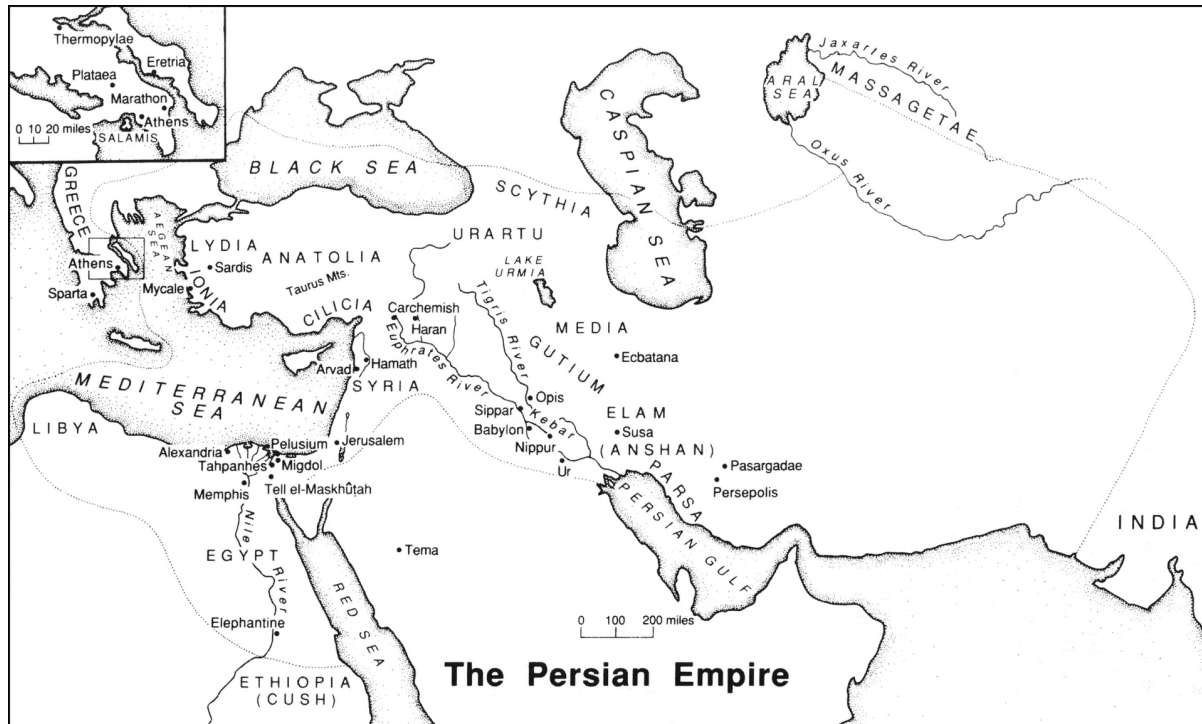
*This is what happened during the time of Xerxes, the Xerxes who ruled over 127 provinces stretching from India to Cush: <sup>2</sup> At that time King Xerxes reigned from his royal throne in the citadel of Susa, <sup>3</sup> and in the third year of his reign he gave a banquet for all his nobles and officials. The military leaders of Persia and Media, the princes, and the nobles of the provinces were present. <sup>4</sup> For a full 180 days he displayed the vast wealth of his kingdom and the splendor and glory of his majesty.*

- (a) **The king:** Xerxes (reigned ca. 486-465 BC); also known as Ahasuerus (Hebrew name). Like his father (Darius Hystaspes), he tried to expand the Persian empire to the west, notably to Greece. He moved westward in 481 BC, defeated the Greeks initially, but the tide turned at Salamis where 200 Persian ships were lost. The Persian armies also suffered defeat and by 479 BC the Persians retreated back to Asia.

**Insight:** The later life of Xerxes

Meanwhile Xerxes had become completely discredited and so turned to a life of licentious indulgence. He dallied with the most beautiful women of the court, including the wives of some of his chief officials, and thereby sowed the seeds of irreparable dissension. At last his dissipation was rewarded by assassination at the hands of a palace official or jealous husband. (E. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 499)

- (b) **The location:** Susa (or Shushan) was a winter capital (among others) for the Persian empire. Note the map which follows. Susa is located north of the mouth of the Persian gulf.



Taken from E. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests*, 472.

(c) **The invitees:** “nobles and officials,” “military leaders,” “princes, and nobles of the provinces” were all in attendance. The gathering of this elite group occurred in Xerxes’ third year (482 BC) and lasted six months (1:4). Apparently in conjunction with the lavish feasting there was final military planning for the pending invasion of Greece (481 BC).

(d) **The second banquet:** “seven days”

Esther 1:5

*When these days were over, the king gave a banquet, lasting seven days, in the enclosed garden of the king’s palace, for all the people from the least to the greatest who were in the citadel of Susa.*

This banquet was for all people “from the least to the greatest.” It was given in a lavish setting, wine was served and the guests were to drink as little or as much as they wished.

(2) Setting: The Queen’s banquet (1:9)

Esther 1:9

*Queen Vashti also gave a banquet for the women in the royal palace of King Xerxes.*

For whatever reasons the queen also had a contemporaneous banquet for women. This would not be for the reason that Persian banquets were segregated; they were not. But why the queen acted not in concert with the king is unknown.

(3) Summons: the king’s request (1:10-12)

Esther 1:10-12

*On the seventh day, when King Xerxes was in high spirits from wine, he commanded the seven eunuchs who served him—Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar*

*and Karkas—<sup>11</sup> to bring before him Queen Vashti, wearing her royal crown, in order to display her beauty to the people and nobles, for she was lovely to look at.<sup>12</sup> But when the attendants delivered the king's command, Queen Vashti refused to come. Then the king became furious and burned with anger.*

- (a) On the seventh day of feasting and drinking the king was “in high spirits” (10).
  - (b) The trusted eunuchs were commanded to summon the queen to display her beauty before the drunken revelers (10-11).
  - (c) The queen refused; the king “became furious and burned with anger” (12).
- (4) Sequence: events unfold (1:13-22)
- (a) Counselors consulted (13-15)

Esther 1:13, 15  
*Since it was customary for the king to consult experts in matters of law and justice, he spoke with the wise men who understood the times... “According to law, what must be done to Queen Vashti?” he asked. “She has not obeyed the command of King Xerxes that the eunuchs have taken to her.”*
  - (b) Counsel considered (16-20)

Esther 1:16-17  
*“Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only against the king but also against all the nobles and the peoples of all the provinces of King Xerxes.<sup>17</sup> For the queen’s conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, ‘King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come.’”*

Esther 1:19-20

*“Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media, which cannot be repealed, that Vashti is never again to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is better than she.”<sup>20</sup> Then when the king’s edict is proclaimed throughout all his vast realm, all the women will respect their husbands, from the least to the greatest.”*

(c) Command commissioned (21-22)

Esther 1:22

*He sent dispatches to all parts of the kingdom, to each province in its own script and to each people in their own language, proclaiming that every man should be ruler over his own household, using his native tongue.*

**Insight:**

Baldwin (as referenced by Breneman, *NAC: Esther*, 310) notes the subtle ironies the author communicates in this narrative. The great king of a huge empire is humiliated by his queen; in a fit of rage he is appeased by his counselors and makes a decree that makes him look like a fool.

b. Esther discovered: declared queen (2:1-18)

The search for a new queen commenced shortly later, “when the anger of King Xerxes had subsided” (1).

(1) The plan: replace Vashti (1-4)

Esther 2:2-4

*Then the king's personal attendants proposed, "Let a search be made for beautiful young virgins for the king. <sup>3</sup> Let the king appoint commissioners in every province of his realm to bring all these beautiful young women into the harem at the citadel of Susa. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. <sup>4</sup> Then let the young woman who pleases the king be queen instead of Vashti." This advice appealed to the king, and he followed it.*

For historical perspective, refer back to the chart, "Chronology of the Book of Esther," page 59.

(2) The procedure: eligible girls brought to Susa (5-11).

The beautiful girls selected came from the provinces throughout the empire. For most of the girls this would be neither an honor nor pleasurable. Each would be uprooted from their homes and assigned (perhaps, "confined") to the king's harem for an indefinite period of time.

Esther 2:5-7

*Now there was in the citadel of Susa a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, named Mordecai son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, <sup>6</sup> who had been carried into exile from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, among those taken captive with Jehoiachin king of Judah. <sup>7</sup> Mordecai had a cousin named Hadassah, whom he had brought up because she had neither father nor mother. This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure*

*and was beautiful. Mordecai had taken her as his own daughter when her father and mother died.*

- (a) Note the introduction of two key protagonists in this narrative drama: Mordecai and Esther (“Haddassah”).
- (b) Mordecai (a Persian name) is mentioned some 58 times in the Book of Esther; he is referred to as a Jew 7 times (2:5; 5:13; 6:10; 8:7; 9:29, 31; 10:3).
- (c) Mordecai is Esther’s cousin and Esther is adopted, therefore under his guidance and care.

Esther 2:8-9<sup>a</sup>

*When the king’s order and edict had been proclaimed, many young women were brought to the citadel of Susa and put under the care of Hegai. Esther also was taken to the king’s palace and entrusted to Hegai, who had charge of the harem.<sup>9</sup> She pleased him and won his favor. Immediately he provided her with her beauty treatments and special food.*

- (a) “Many girls” (an indefinite number though the Jewish historian, Josephus, suggested 400) were brought to Susa.
- (b) An ancient Jewish Targum (Aramaic translations of the Old Testament with annotated notes) states that Esther was forcibly taken, though the Hebrew text is silent in that regard.
- (c) Remarkably, Esther’s beauty and countenance pleased Hegai, the official in charge of the harem.



**Insight:**

Hegai provided beauty treatments and “special food,” that is by Persian standards. Note the contrast between Daniel who refused the Babylonian king’s choice food (Dan 1) to Esther who apparently accepted it. The reason may be linked to her secret Jewish identity.

Esther 2:10-11

*Esther had not revealed her nationality and family background, because Mordecai had forbidden her to do so. <sup>11</sup> Every day he walked back and forth near the courtyard of the harem to find out how Esther was and what was happening to her.*

(3) The choice: Esther selected as queen (12-18)

(a) Preparation and waiting (12-14)

After months of beauty treatments individual girls would be summoned to the palace for one night with the king. Afterwards, the girl would be assigned to the harem where she might (or might not, a virtual widowhood) be summoned again.

The abuse of the beautiful girls and the despicable use of regal power is certainly evident by modern evaluation. King David makes an interesting observation in Psalm 37 that provides a different perspective.

Psalm 37:1-6

*Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; <sup>2</sup> for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe*

*pasture. <sup>4</sup> Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.*

(b) Presentation and selection (15-18)

Esther 2:17-18

*Now the king was attracted to Esther more than to any of the other women, and she won his favor and approval more than any of the other virgins. So he set a royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.*

*<sup>18</sup> And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.*

c. Mordecai's discovery: a plot uncovered (2:19-23)

(1) Prelude (19-20)

Esther may have used her new found status as queen to appoint Mordecai to a minor, official position ("sitting at the king's gate"). She also continued to keep her Jewish heritage secret and followed her cousin's instructions.

(2) Plans (21-23)

Esther 2:21-23

*During the time Mordecai was sitting at the king's gate, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, became angry and conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. <sup>22</sup> But Mordecai found out about the plot and told Queen Esther, who in turn reported it to the king, giving credit to Mordecai. <sup>23</sup> And when*

*the report was investigated and found to be true, the two officials were impaled on poles. All this was recorded in the book of the annals in the presence of the king.*

2. Decree of Haman (3:1-15)

a. First: Haman receives honor (1-2)

Esther 3:1-2

*After these events, King Xerxes honored Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, elevating him and giving him a seat of honor higher than that of all the other nobles. <sup>2</sup> All the royal officials at the king's gate knelt down and paid honor to Haman, for the king had commanded this concerning him. **But Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor.***

- (1) King Xerxes conferred high honor upon Haman (though no specific reason is given).
- (2) Haman was an Agagite (i.e. a distant descendant of the Amalekites, the ancient foes of the Israelites) (cf. Ex 17:5—generation to generation war; note Balaam's oracle of Num 24:7; Saul the Benjamite and the incomplete obedience of 1 Sam 15).
- (3) Mordecai was an Israelite of Benjamite heritage (Esth 2:5). These ancestral adversaries likely spurred Haman's hatred of Mordecai in particular and Israelites (Jews) generally.

b. Second: Haman plots revenge (3-15)

(1) His dangerous anger (3-6)

Esther 3:5-6

*When Haman saw that Mordecai would not kneel down or pay him honor, he was enraged. <sup>6</sup> Yet having learned who Mordecai's people were, he scorned the idea of killing only Mordecai. Instead Haman looked for a way to destroy all Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the whole kingdom of Xerxes.*

Mordecai's refusal to bow down and Haman's rage at the affront likely is a mutual antagonism borne of their ancestral conflicts. Haman's anger will be directed to (1) first, Mordecai for his perceived insult, (2) second, to the Jews within Persian rule.

(2) His devious arrangement (7-11)

Esther 3:8-9

*Then Haman said to King Xerxes, "There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king's laws; it is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. <sup>9</sup> If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will give ten thousand talents of silver to the king's administrators for the royal treasury."*

King Xerxes agreed to Haman's plan (with the signifying seal of the king's signet ring). Further, the king instructed Haman:

Esther 3:10-11

*So the king took his signet ring from his finger and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. <sup>11</sup> "Keep the money," the king said to Haman, "and do with the people as you please."*

(3) His deadly announcement (12-16)

The plans of Haman had been ratified by the king, published throughout the empire, and a specific date issued to (1) destroy the Jews and (2) plunder their goods and possessions.

Esther 3:15

*The couriers went out, spurred on by the king's command, and the edict was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was bewildered.*

**Insight:**

Constable (23) quotes Chuck Swindoll as to three lessons to be learned at this pivotal point.

“First, from Mordecai we learn: *Never forget there will always be someone who will resent your devotion to the Lord.* Second, from Haman we learn: *Never underestimate the diabolical nature of revenge...* Third, from Ahasuerus: *Never overestimate the value of your own importance.*”

### 3. Decision of Mordecai (4:1-17)

The outlook for the Jews (note the occurrence of “Jews” five times in the text) appears bleak and without hope. Mordecai must act on behalf of his people but will need the help of the Jewish (albeit secret) queen.

#### a. Mordecai’s panic (1-3)

Esther 4:1-3

*When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. <sup>2</sup> But he went only as far as the king’s gate, because no one clothed in sackcloth was allowed to enter it. <sup>3</sup> In every province to which the edict and order of the king came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting, weeping and wailing. Many lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

#### b. Mordecai’s pain (4-8)

Mordecai’s outward mourning came to the attention of the queen. Although she tried to send fresh clothing to replace the sackcloth, he would not do so. Finally, the queen sent a messenger (Hathach) to discover the reason for Mordecai’s pain.

Esther 4:7-8

*Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him, including the exact amount of money Haman had promised to pay into the royal treasury for the destruction of the Jews.<sup>8</sup> He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.*

- (1) Mordecai knows of the money Haman offered (7) and of the official edict soon to be enacted (8).
- (2) Mordecai urges Esther to approach the king and beg for mercy. This in effect was risky (appearing without invitation) and revealing (that Esther, too, was a Jew).

c. Mordecai's plea (9-14)

Esther's response demonstrates awareness of the risk of outright approaching the king (10-11). Mordecai responded that Esther's hidden Jewishness was not going to save her family or her people when the time came.

Esther 4:14

*For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?"*

**Insight:**

This verse (14) may indeed be the most important in the book. It is a pivot point and revealing. Without using God's name or appealing directly to Him, Mordecai suggests that this moment may be providentially "the" moment that will ultimately save and preserve the Jewish people. Providence is "a belief that God rules in the world, even in the details of the nations and in the lives of individuals" (Breneman, 337).

d. Mordecai's plan (15-17)

Esther 4:15-17

*Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." <sup>17</sup> So Mordecai went away and carried out all of Esther's instructions.*

Note the courage of Queen Esther. From voicing fears to what seems to be a courageous faith, she declares, "If I perish, I perish" (16).

Individual and national lives lie in the balance. The irrational hatred of one egotistical, narcissistic official (Haman) seems to be about to come to fruition. But the story continues.

4. Dinner with the King (5:1-14)  
(Esther vs Haman)

a. The first banquet: Esther's bold move (1-8)

(1) Esther approaches the king (1-2).

"On the third day" refers to the third day of fasting (4:16). Time was short, action was needed. Adorned in her royal robes the queen stood in the king's presence unannounced and unsummoned.

Providentially the king “held out to her the golden scepter” (2).

- (2) The King questioned the Queen (3).

Esther 5:3

*Then the king asked, “What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.”*

- (3) The Queen replies (4).

Esther 5:4

*“If it pleases the king,” replied Esther, “let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.”*

The desire of the queen was to honor the king and the king’s official, Haman, at a royal banquet. No doubt that the king knew there was a petition to the king coming. Esther, however, realized that a first banquet followed by a second would accomplish her purposes. That God is guiding the events seems evident.

- (4) The banquet (first) takes place (5-8).

Esther 5:5-8

*“Bring Haman at once,” the king said, “so that we may do what Esther asks.” So the king and Haman went to the banquet Esther had prepared. <sup>6</sup> As they were drinking wine, the king again asked Esther, “Now what is your petition? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.” <sup>7</sup> Esther replied, “My petition and my request is this: <sup>8</sup> If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king’s question.”*



b. The aftermath of the banquet: Haman's rage and hubris (9-14)

(1) Haman's rage (9-10<sup>a</sup>)

Esther 5:9-10<sup>a</sup>

*Haman went out that day happy and in high spirits. But when he saw Mordecai at the king's gate and observed that he neither rose nor showed fear in his presence, he was filled with rage against Mordecai.*

<sup>10</sup> *Nevertheless, Haman restrained himself and went home.*

(2) Haman's hubris (10<sup>b</sup>-12)

Esther 5:10<sup>b</sup>-12

*Calling together his friends and Zeresh, his wife, <sup>11</sup> Haman boasted to them about his vast wealth, his many sons, and all the ways the king had honored him and how he had elevated him above the other nobles and officials. <sup>12</sup> "And that's not all," Haman added. "I'm the only person Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave. And she has invited me along with the king tomorrow."*

(3) Haman's rage (13)

Esther 5:13

*But all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate."*

(4) Haman's counsel from wife and friends (14)

Esther 5:14

*His wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have a pole set up, reaching to a height of fifty cubits, and ask the king in the morning to have Mordecai impaled on it. Then go with the king to the banquet and enjoy yourself." This suggestion delighted Haman, and he had the pole set up. This*

chapter is full of fury, pride, and unbounded ego. It also strikes an ironic note. The very gallows upon which Haman hopes to hang Mordecai will ultimately be his destined end.

Breneman (342) rightly observes,

Haman did not realize he was preparing his own doom, and he was not alone in preparing his own downfall. The Bible teaches that all are guilty of the same sin: “Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom 2:5).

## **B. Deliverance and Conclusion (6:1-10:3)**

1. Destiny of Haman (6:1-7:10)
  - a. Mordecai’s exaltation (6:1-14)
    - (1) Insomnia and oversight (1-3): The King alone Sleepless that night the King ordered “the book of the chronicles” brought in to be read to the king. Providentially (once again the hidden hand of God) the account of Mordecai’s past exposing of an assassination attempt against Xerxes was read. When questioned if Mordecai was given “honor and recognition” for this notable act, the attendants replied, “Nothing has been done for him.”  
  
The king must address this oversight. But what should the proper reward and recognition be? Enter Haman who has come to the palace early in order to finalize the King’s permission to hang Mordecai (cf. 3:8-9; especially 5:14).
    - (2) Advice requested and provided: The King and Haman (4-11)

Esther 6:6

*When Haman entered, the king asked him, "What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?" Now Haman thought to himself, "Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?"*

Thinking that the King meant to honor himself Haman suggested:

- a royal robe (to be publicly worn)
- a royal horse (to be publicly ridden)
- a choice prince (to be publicly honored)
- a royal parade (to be publicly praised)

That the King would agree to all that Haman counseled was sharply turned from joy to grief by the King's response.

Esther 6:10

*"Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended."*

(3) Confusion and grief: Haman debased (12-14)

Esther 6:12-13<sup>a</sup>

*Afterward Mordecai returned to the king's gate. But Haman rushed home, with his head covered in grief,<sup>13</sup> and told Zeresh his wife and all his friends everything that had happened to him.*

While Haman shared his shame over the rapid turnabout of events, the royal messengers arrived to escort Haman to Queen Esther's special, second banquet. Little did he realize that this banquet of expected honor would in fact turn out to be a banquet of condemnation.

b. Mordecai's exaltation (7:1-10)

(1) Esther's second banquet (1-2)

Esther 7:1-2

*So the king and Haman went to Queen Esther's banquet, <sup>2</sup> and as they were drinking wine on the second day, the king again asked, "Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted."*

(2) Esther's plea (3-7)

Esther 7:3-4

*Then Queen Esther answered, "If I have found favor with you, Your Majesty, and if it pleases you, grant me my life—this is my petition. And spare my people—this is my request. <sup>4</sup> For I and my people have been sold to be destroyed, killed and annihilated. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, because no such distress would justify disturbing the king."*

The request was two-fold: spare my life and the life of my people. The king's response was amazement. "Who is he? Where is the man who has dared such a thing?" (5)

To this point Esther has not revealed her heritage. Had she done so, the King would have reasoned out this crisis event. To answer the King, Esther replied.

Esther 7:6-7

*Esther said, "An adversary and enemy! This vile Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. <sup>7</sup> The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life.*

The enraged king left the banquet only to return to see Haman “falling on the couch where Esther was reclining” (8). Xerxes thought Haman to be molesting the queen (not emotionally begging mercy).

(3) King’s command (8-10)

Esther 7:9<sup>b</sup>-10

*The king said, “Impale him on it!”<sup>10</sup> So they impaled Haman on the pole he had set up for Mordecai. Then the king’s fury subsided.*

**Insight:**

M. Breneman (350) suggests,

In this verse the character of the three protagonists is brought out. Haman was a prideful man with a cowardly heart. The king was easily influenced and weak in spite of his appearance of power. Esther was courageous and steadfast. She is not to be considered hard and calloused because she would not listen to Haman’s pleas. She could not have helped even if she had wished to do so.

2. Decree of the King (8:1-17)

With the disposal of Haman, the deliverance of Mordecai and Esther are secured. But what of the Jews throughout the Persian empire? A Persian king’s royal edict was irrevocable (8).

a. The king honors Mordecai (1-2)

Esther 8:1-2

*That same day King Xerxes gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her.<sup>2</sup> The king took off his signet ring, which he had reclaimed from Haman, and presented it to Mordecai. And Esther appointed him over Haman’s estate.*

b. The king receives Esther (3-6)

- (1) Esther humbly throws herself at the feet of Xerxes (3-4).
- (2) The King extends the golden scepter permitting the queen to make her impassioned plea (5-6).

Esther 8:5-6

*"If it pleases the king," she said, "and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. <sup>6</sup> For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?"*

c. The King proposes a new (second) edict (7-17)

- (1) The new edict approved (7-10)

Esther 8:7-8

*King Xerxes replied to Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, "Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have impaled him on the pole he set up. <sup>8</sup> Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring—for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked."*

With these new orders in place, the palace secretaries were summoned and the new edict was published and commissioned to be sent throughout the empire (9-10).

- (2) The new edict empowers the Jews (11-13)

While the original edict masterminded by Haman could not be revoked, the new edict empowered the Jews...

- To assemble and protect themselves;
- To fight against (“destroy”) any nationality or province that attacked them;
- To plunder (thereby) the property of their enemies (when defeated).

(3) The new edict elates the Jews (14-17)

Esther 8:16-17

*For the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor.<sup>17</sup> In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.*

3. Destruction of enemies (9:1-32)

(a) The Jews defend themselves (1-4)

Esther 9:1-2

*On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, the edict commanded by the king was to be carried out. On this day the enemies of the Jews had hoped to overpower them, but now the tables were turned and the Jews got the upper hand over those who hated them.<sup>2</sup> The Jews assembled in their cities in all the provinces of King Xerxes to attack those determined to destroy them. No one could stand against them, because the people of all the other nationalities were afraid of them.*

(b) The Jews defeat their enemies (5-17)

(1) Enemies in Susa (5-15)

Esther 9:5-6

*The Jews struck down all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and they did what they pleased to those who hated them. <sup>6</sup> In the citadel of Susa, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.*

(2) Enemies in the provinces (16-17)

Esther 9:16-17

*Meanwhile, the remainder of the Jews who were in the king's provinces also assembled to protect themselves and get relief from their enemies. They killed seventy-five thousand of them but did not lay their hands on the plunder. <sup>17</sup> This happened on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and on the fourteenth they rested and made it a day of feasting and joy.*

Constable (36) summarizes the victory of the Jews over their enemies in the following chart.

ENEMIES KILLED BY THE JEWS			
Number	Place	Date	Ref.
500 men	in the acropolis of Susa	Adar 13 (March 7)	9:6, 12
75,000 people	in other parts of the empire	Adar 13 (March 7)	9:16
300 men	in Susa	Adar 14 (March 8)	9:15

(c) The Jews establish “Purim” as a religious feast.

Proverbs 21:1

*In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.*



## B. Hubris (Pride)

The Book of Esther presents the antagonist within the drama, Haman, a high court official. He is depicted as egotistical, prideful, arrogant, ambitious and conniving.

Proverbs 11:2-3

*When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. <sup>3</sup> The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*

Proverbs 16:8

*Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.*

Haman's target for his devious schemes was Mordecai, the Jew. Throughout the book their character and responses are notable. The following proverb provides a classic summary of the differences between the two

Proverbs 18:12

*Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.*

## C. Courage

On a number of occasions, Queen Esther's courage is tested. To take decisive actions, to approach the King unbidden, Esther often must act courageously. When Mordecai implores Esther to dangerously act on behalf of the imperiled Jews, he suggested, "And who know but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this?" (4:14)

Esther's reply was noteworthy

Esther 4:16

*"Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. **And if I perish, I perish.**"*

#### **D. Feast of Purim**

Haman had plans to exterminate the Jews and had the lot (Heb. pur) cast to decide the day. His plans were foiled by Mordecai and Esther and later Mordecai enjoined the Jews to remember the great day of their deliverance by celebrating it annually (Est 9:20-22). This has been Jewish practice ever since.

# SESSION 4

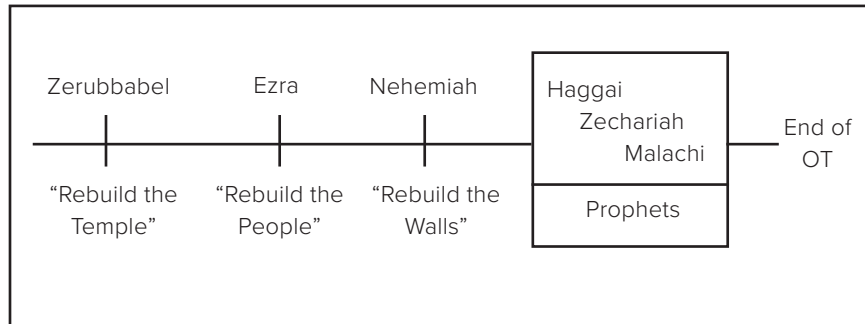
## Haggai and Zechariah (Part One)

### I. PRAYER

### II. PANORAMA OF THE BIBLE

PANORAMA: MOVEMENTS 1-9	
Movement	Biblical Books
#1 Prologue	Genesis 1-11
#2 Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50; Job
#3 Redemption and Wanderings	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
#4 Conquest	Joshua
#5 Apostasy	Judges, Ruth
#6 Kingship: United Monarchy	1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11 (Pss, Prov, Eccl, Song of Solomon)
#7 Kingship: Divided Monarchy	1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings (Prophets - selected)
#8 Exile	Ezekiel, Daniel (Jeremiah)
<b>#9 Return from Exile and 400 Silent Years</b>	<b>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)</b>
<b>Note:</b> Movements 1-9 comprise the Old Testament. Between Movement 9 and Movement 10 (Life of Christ) lie the four hundred years of silence (no revelations from God through angels, prophets, or other means).	

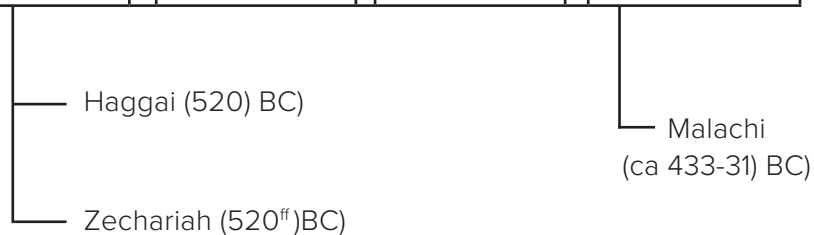
### III. MOVEMENT #9: RETURN FROM EXILE (Timeline)



### IV. CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING

The post-exilic historical books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther are related. The following chart (Wilkinson and Boa, 118) shows the interrelatedness of these books.

538-515 BC	483-473 BC	457 BC	444-425 BC
Zerubbabel	Esther	Ezra	Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10	Book of Nehemiah
First Return	In Persia	Second Return	Third Return



## V. THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

### A. Author

Nine times the name Haggai occurs in the Book of Haggai (1:1, 3, 12-13; 2:1, 10, 13-14, 20). His name only appears two other times in the Old Testament, Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 (where he is encouraging the rebuilding of the Temple).

Haggai means “festival” or “my feast.” His background is obscure. There is no evidence of his tribe or ancestral origins. The fact that Haggai mentions the glory of the former Temple (of Solomon) in 2:3 leads some to believe that Haggai actually saw that Temple. If so, he would be in his late seventies or eighties at the time of his prophecy. Yet, there is no certainty that that was his meaning.

### B. Theme of Haggai

The major concern of the prophet was to get the Temple rebuilt. But enthusiasm for completion of the project had waned. The people had begun to prioritize personal pursuits to the neglect of the Temple. The Lord spoke clearly through the prophet. *“Build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored”* (1:8).

### C. Key Dates: Relevant to Haggai

Note: the dates which follow are suggested by E. Merrill (*NOTS*, 814) and I. Jensen (*JSOT*, 456-57).

- 586 BC ... Jerusalem taken, Temple destroyed by the Babylonians
- 539 BC ... Babylon falls to the Persians
- 538 BC ... Cyrus’ decree allows Jews to return to their homeland
- 537 BC ... Building of the Altar

- 536 BC ... Work begins on the Temple; opposition also begins which leads to a work stoppage
- 520 BC ... Haggai (and later Zechariah) urge the people to restart their efforts to rebuild the Temple
- 515 BC ... Second Temple (distinguished from Solomon's "First Temple") completed

#### **D. Dating the Four Oracles (Messages) of Haggai**

1. Oracle 1 (Hag 1:1-15) ..... August 29, 520 BC
2. Oracle 2 (Hag 2:1-9) ..... October 17, 520 BC
3. Oracle 3 (Hag 2:10-19) ..... December 18, 520 BC
4. Oracle 4 (Hag 2:20-23) .... December 18, 520 BC

#### **E. Distinctives of Haggai**

1. It is the second shortest book of the Old Testament (next to Obadiah).
2. It is characterized as rhythmic prose rather than customary prophetic poetry.
3. It has a relatively simple and direct literary style (as compared to Zechariah, e.g.).
4. It is structured around four distinct oracles (or messages) delivered over 4 months.
5. It is somewhat unusual for prophetic literature in that the people responded affirmatively to the prophet's word.
6. It is distinctive among Old Testament prophets as there is no condemnation of idolatry, no issues of social justice or abuses of Mosaic Law. Rather, the primary message was "rebuild the Temple... immediately!"

## F. Chart of Haggai

HAGGAI			
Chapter 1		Chapter 2	
Message #1  Rebuke: “this house (Temple) remains a ruin” (4)		Message #2  Future Blessing: “I will fill this house with glory” (7)	
1:1 <div>1:11</div>		2:1	2:9
Response: “they came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty their God” (14)		Message #3  Moral Purity: “give careful thought to” (3 times) ... moral defilement which prevents blessings	
1:12 <div>1:15</div>		2:10	2:19
		Message #4  Symbolism: “I will make you (Zerubbabel) like my signet ring for I have chosen you” (23)	
		2:20	2:23
August 29, 520 BC (#1)		Oct 17, 520 BC #2	Dec 18, 520 BC (#3-4)

## **G. Outline of Haggai**

The following brief outline will provide the structure for the section which will follow, VI. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT.

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### **Outline of Haggai**

- I. ORACLE ONE: REBUILD THE TEMPLE! (1:1-15)**
  - A. Rebuke: Get Your Priorities in Order! (1-11)**
  - B. Response: Obeyed, Feared, Began to Work (12-15)**
- II. ORACLE TWO: BE ENCOURAGED! (2:1-9)**
  - A. Promise of the Lord's Presence (1-5)**
  - B. Prediction of Future Glory (6-9)**
- III. ORACLE THREE: CLEAN UP YOUR ACT! (2:10-19)**
  - A. Principle of Defilement (10-14)**
  - B. Rededication and Blessing (15-19)**
- IV. ORACLE FOUR: DAVIDIC KING TO COME! (2:20-23)**
  - A. Judgment of Gentile Kingdoms (20-21)**
  - B. Restoration of Davidic Kingdom (23)**

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## **VI. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **A. Oracle One: Rebuild the Temple! (1:1-15)**

- 1. Rebuke: Get your priorities in order! (1-11)
  - a. Superscription (1)
    - (1) Date: August 29, 520 BC
    - (2) Prophet: Haggai (the prophetic instrument)
    - (3) Recipients: Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua in some translations)



b. Accusation (2-6)

The prophet begins with the authoritative note, “this is what the Lord Almighty says.” The reference to God as “Lord Almighty” occurs 14 times in Haggai. First, the Lord Almighty relates what the people have been saying.

Haggai 1:2

*This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’S house.’”*

Next, the prophet clarifies the heart issue of personal agendas over against God’s agenda (here, the rebuilding of the Temple - the House of prayer and worship). The work had begun some sixteen years earlier, but had since been neglected.

Haggai 1:3-4

*Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?”*

- (1) This rebuke could refer to building personal houses to the neglect of God’s “house.”
- (2) This rebuke could also refer to the practice of the wealthy in building luxurious homes while the Temple yet remained unbuilt.

Beginning with verse 5, God cautions the people to “give careful thought” to their ways (lit. set your heart on your ways).

Haggai 1:5-6

*Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “**Give careful thought to your ways.**” <sup>6</sup> You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm.*

*You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”*

- (1) The Lord pointed out their pitiful condition of weak harvests and generally poor conditions.
- (2) The perceptive ones should have recognized that neglect of spiritual life (as evidenced by Temple worship) would result in the denial of God’s blessings.

Leviticus 26:18-20 (also Deut 28:38-40)

*“If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. <sup>19</sup> I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. <sup>20</sup> Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of your land yield their fruit.*

Practical insight: Note also Jesus’ perspective on life priorities.

Matthew 6:33

*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

c. Exhortation (7-8)

Haggai 1:7-8

*This is what the LORD Almighty says: **“Give careful thought to your ways.”** <sup>8</sup> Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD.*

d. Expectation (9-11)

Haggai 1:9-11

*“You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. <sup>10</sup> Therefore,*

*because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. <sup>11</sup> I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands."*

The text gives two specific reasons for the Temple to be rebuilt. Theologically others could be added to the two, but the Lord highlights two very important reasons:

- (1) "That I may take pleasure in it" (or, be pleased).
- (2) "(That I may) be honored" (or glorified).

## 2. Reaction (12-15)

In response, Zerubbabel, Joshua and the remnant *"obeyed the voice of the Lord their God" and "the people feared the Lord" (12).*

Haggai 1:13

*Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD.*

As a result the people "came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God..." (14).

Note the summary:

- People: obeyed, feared, worked
- Lord: "I am with you" (enabling presence)

## **B. Oracle Two: Be Encouraged! (2:1-9)**

### 1. Promise of the Lord's Presence (1-5)

#### a. Superscription (1-2)

Haggai 2:1-2

*On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>2</sup> "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people.*

- (1) Date: October 17, 520 BC
- (2) Prophet: Haggai
- (3) Recipients: Zerubbabel (governor), Joshua (High Priest), and “the remnant” (cf. 1:12)

b. Comparison (3)

Haggai 2:3

*“Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?”*

c. Exhortation (4-5)

Haggai 2:4-5

*“‘But now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ declares the LORD. ‘Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the LORD, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>5</sup> ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’”*

- (1) Each of the recipients are exhorted to “be strong” and “work.”
- (2) The Lord assures the people:
  - (a) “I am with you” (presence and power).
  - (b) I have covenanted with you - as when you left Egypt (“exodus”) and as you left Babylon (metaphorical Egypt?).
  - (c) “My Spirit remains among you.”
  - (d) Therefore, “do not fear” (the opposite of faith).

2. Prediction of future glory (2:6-9)

Haggai 2:6-9

*“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup> I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the*

*LORD Almighty. <sup>8</sup> 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>9</sup> 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."*

There had been unfavorable comparisons of the new temple to the splendor (and size) of Solomon's temple (First Temple). *"Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now?"* (2:3) In reply, the Lord Almighty predicts a future time when the Temple will be glorified greater than even Solomon's. In fact, the Lord promises:

- a. I will shake all creation (6).
- b. I will shake all nations (7).
- c. I will fill this house (i.e. the Temple of that coming time) with abundant glory (7). The gold and silver that will adorn this Temple will be from the Lord (8).
- d. I will grant peace (at that time) (9).

Theologically, what temple and when will these predictive promises occur? It is possible that the future expansion and glorification of the Second Temple by Herod the Great is in view. But not all of the predictive elements came to pass in Herod's Temple. Perhaps, better this prophetically refers to the future millennial temple during the Messianic Kingdom (Millennium).

### **C. Oracle Three: Clean up your act! (2:10-19)**

- 1. Principle of defilement (10-14)
  - a. Superscription (10)
    - (1) Date: December 18, 520 BC
    - (2) Prophet: Haggai
    - (3) Recipients: priests (and remnant)

b. Comparison (11-14)

The Lord speaks through Haggai to question the priests about ritual purity and defilement.

(1) Question #1 and Response

Haggai 2:11-12

*“This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Ask the priests what the law says: <sup>12</sup> If someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?’” The priests answered, “No.”*

(2) Question #2 and Response

Haggai 2:13

*Then Haggai said, “If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?” “Yes,” the priests replied, “it becomes defiled.”*

(3) Lord’s Summation

Haggai 2:14

*Then Haggai said, “‘So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,’ declares the LORD. ‘Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.’”*

2. Re-dedication and blessing (15-19)

Three times in 2:15-19 the Lord says “give careful thought to.” In light of the previous questions (2:11-13), the Lord makes application to the presenting problem. If we have started to build the altar and then the Second Temple, then why are we not blessed? The Lord acknowledged their difficulties in harvesting good crops and made this penetrating observation.

Haggai 2:17-18

*“‘I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,’ declares the LORD. <sup>18</sup> ‘From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, **give careful***

**thought to** the day when the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid. **Give careful thought:**"

But if the people would take to heart the Lord's prophetic words, then blessing would come (19).

#### **D. Oracle Four: Davidic King to Come! (2:20-23)**

##### 1. Judgment of Gentile Kingdoms (20-21)

###### a. Superscription (20)

Haggai 2:20-21<sup>a</sup>

*The word of the LORD came to Haggai a second time on the twenty-fourth day of the month: <sup>21</sup> "Tell Zerubbabel governor of Judah..."*

###### b. Description of future judgment (21<sup>b</sup>-22)

The Lord declares three things that He will accomplish ("I will"—3 times).

(1) "I will shake the heavens and the earth" (21<sup>b</sup>).

This is judgment language concerning the nations, not Israel (see the next point which follows).

(2) "I will overturn royal thrones and shatter the power of foreign kingdoms" (22<sup>a</sup>). Refer to Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45 for a parallel, similar prophecy.

(3) "I will overthrow chariots... their drivers, horses and their riders..." (22<sup>b</sup>).

Fredrick Tatford (621) makes this summary observation:

Thrones were to be overthrown, the inherent power of kingdoms was to be destroyed, military forces were to be completely routed, and confusion created among them. The picture painted is of some terrible event affecting the whole world. It can only refer to the second advent of our Lord, when He rides forth from the celestial heights in all His power and glory to execute judgment in a guilty world. In that day,

nations will be trampled underfoot, thrones toppled down and rulers destroyed. As many prophecies indicate, the armies of the nations, gathered up to besiege the holy city, will be destroyed by the Son of Man in all His glory and power. No other event can satisfy the description given. This is a happening which is unparalleled in human history. Powers of north and south, east and west will be destroyed at the coming of the mighty Conqueror in that day.

Judah might well bear the judgments of that day, but the concluding verse of the prophecy provided the assurance they so sorely needed.

## 2. Restoration of Davidic Kingdom (23)

Haggai 2:23

*“‘On that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘I will take you, my servant Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel,’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”*

a. “On that day” must refer to the far future.

b. “I will” introduces the final two predictive promises:

(1) “I will take my servant Zerubbabel”

At the time of this prophecy there was no Davidic king on the throne of Israel. The Jews were under Persian rule and domination.

Yet, a day was coming when a special Davidic descendant would rule.

Prophetically, it would appear that Zerubbabel (a Davidic descendant, potential heir to the Davidic dynasty promised in 2 Sam 7) was symbolic of that future king.

(2) “My servant”

The title (my servant) frequently marks out a Davidic king (cf. the servant songs of



Isaiah predicting the Messiah-King in 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 52:13-53:12; also see Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25).

In a similar fashion, Zechariah will refer to Zerubbabel as “the branch,” a Messianic title used in Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-15.

Thus, the reference to the historical Zerubbabel may be prophetic code for the Davidic, Messiah-King to come.

- (3) “I will make you like my signet ring”  
The signet ring was a symbol of royal rule or reign (cf. Jer 22:24-25). It could also be a symbol for ownership. It appears that the right to rule conferred on David’s descendant is being symbolized or personified in Zerubbabel, a Davidic descendant.

In the New Testament, the true and authentic King will appear. Of note is his genealogy as recorded in Matthew.

Matthew 1:12-16

*After the exile to Babylon:*

*Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel,*

*Shealtiel the father of **Zerubbabel**,*

<sup>13</sup> ***Zerubbabel** the father of Abihud,*

*Abihud the father of Eliakim,*

*Eliakim the father of Azor,*

<sup>14</sup> *Azor the father of Zadok,*

*Zadok the father of Akim,*

*Akim the father of Elihud,*

<sup>15</sup> *Elihud the father of Eleazar,*

*Eleazar the father of Matthan,*

*Matthan the father of Jacob,*

<sup>16</sup> *and Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, and Mary was the mother of Jesus who is called the Messiah.*

F. Duane Lindsey (BKC:OT, 1544) thoughtfully notes the implications of the end of Haggai.

Appropriately the last words in Haggai's book are **the LORD Almighty** (cf. comments on Hag 1:2). The sovereign covenant-God is able to bring about all He promised through Haggai. The temple will be rebuilt and filled with the glory of the Lord. The final Son of David will rule the earth in peace and righteousness. Therefore God's people are to be faithful now to the task to which He has called them.

## POINTS TO PONDER

### A. Honoring God

The historical message from Haggai (the Lord speaking through him) was "rebuild the Temple." The practical lesson was clear. Kingdom priorities come before personal agendas.

### B. Be Strong

To finish the task required strength to complete the project. The Lord's command, "Be strong," was followed by His empowering words, "I am with you." The psalmist expressed it this way.

Psalm 16:11

*You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

### C. Purity

A defiled people needed to turn to the Lord and obediently complete the Temple task. Their inadequate harvests demonstrated their inadequate hearts. Defilement (morally, ethically, or spiritually) must be dealt with before experiencing God's blessing. The remnant of Haggai's time needed that reminder. So do we.

1 Timothy 5:22<sup>b</sup>

*"...and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure."*

Ps 51:10

*“Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*

**D. Promise and Fulfillment**

Always we should remember: God is a Promise-Maker and a Promise-Keeper. What He prophetically promises will surely come to pass.

# **ZECHARIAH – PART ONE**

## I. CHRONOLOGICAL CONTEXT FOR “ZECHARIAH”

538-515 BC	483-473 BC	457 BC	444-425 BC
Zerubbabel	Esther	Ezra	Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10	Book of Nehemiah
First Return	In Persia	Second Return	Third Return

Haggai (520 BC)  
Zechariah (520<sup>ff</sup> BC)

Malachi  
(ca 433-31 BC)

## II. THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

### A. Author

The name, Zechariah, means “God remembers.” Common to the Old Testament almost thirty individuals bear the name. The Zechariah of this prophetic book was both a prophet and priest.

He was probably born in Babylon, joined the return to the homeland under Zerubbabel and Joshua. Likely, Zechariah was a young man when he prophesied along with Haggai (a much older man).

F. Duane Lindsey (*BKC:OT*, 1546) lists several key dates that relate the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah to key events.

Dates of Key Events in Haggai's and Zechariah's Time	
August 29, 520 BC	Haggai's first sermon (Hag 1:1-11; Ezra 5:1)
September 21, 520 BC	Temple building resumed (Hag 1:12-15; Ezra 5:2)
October 17, 520 BC	Haggai's second sermon (Hag 2:1-9)
October-November 520 BC	Zechariah's ministry begun (Zech 1:1-6)
December 18, 520 BC	Haggai's third and fourth sermons (Hag 2:10-23)
February 15, 519 BC	Zechariah's eight visions (Zech 1:7-6:8)
December 7, 518 BC	Delegation from Bethel (Zech 7)
March 12, 515 BC	Temple dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18)

## B. Theme

The Book of Zechariah seems to focus on three major concerns. First, the Temple must be rebuilt. In this Zechariah joins Haggai to urge completion of the project. Second, interspersed with the first emphasis (and prominent in the first eight chapters) is a call to spiritual renewal. "Return to me, declares the Lord Almighty, and I will return to you" (1:3). Third, the book contains numerous Messianic prophecies of both first and second comings. Of particular note, "This book outlines God's program for His people during the times of the Gentiles until Messiah comes to deliver them and reign upon the earth" (Wilkinson and Boa, 290).

### C. Comparison of Haggai and Zechariah

Note the following chart suggested by Wilkinson and Boa, 291.

Haggai	Zechariah
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exhortation</li><li>• More concrete</li><li>• Concise</li><li>• Present concern</li><li>• Take part!</li><li>• Older activist</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encouragement</li><li>• More abstract</li><li>• Expanded</li><li>• Future concern</li><li>• Take heart!</li><li>• Younger visionary</li></ul>

### D. Structure

#### 1. Charted

Refer to the end of this session, page 122 for the full chart of Zechariah. Note that the book has three major sections: eight (8) visions, four (4) messages and two (2) burdens. The full chart can be seen there.

#### 2. Outlined

An abbreviated outline follows.

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## **ZECHARIAH**

### **I. EIGHT VISIONS (1:1-6:15)**

- A. Introduction (1:1-6)**
- B. Vision One: Angelic Horsemen (1:7-17)**
- C. Vision Two: Four Horns/Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)**
- D. Vision Three: Man With a Measuring Line (2:1-13)**
- E. Vision Four: Cleansing of the High Priest (3:1-10)**
- F. Vision Five: Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (4:1-14)**
- G. Vision Six: The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)**
- H. Vision Seven: Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)**
- I. Vision Eight: Four Chariots (6:1-8)**
- J. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)**

### **II. FOUR MESSAGES**

- A. Message One: Empty Ritualism (7:1-7)**
- B. Message Two: Past Disobedience (7:8-14)**
- C. Message Three: Restoration and Encouragement (8:1-17)**
- D. Message Four: Joy in the Future Kingdom (8:18-23)**

### **III. TWO BURDENS (9:1-14:21)**

- A. Burden One: Advent and Rejection of the Messiah (9:1-11:17)**
- B. Burden Two: Advent and Acceptance of the Messiah (12:1-14:21)**

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#### **E. Biblical Development (Part One: Zechariah 1-6)**

The exposition of the text will follow the brief outline above. Note that only the first six chapters of Zechariah will be covered in this session. Chapters 7-14 will be found in Session 5: Zechariah—Part Two (see page 124).



1. Eight (8) visions (1:1-6:15)

The first six chapters narrate 8 visions given to the prophet. For a chart overviewing the basic meaning of each vision, see the chart at the end of Session 4 on page 123. A portion of that chart will appear at the beginning of each individual vision.

a. Introduction (1:1-6)

(1) Context: date and author (1)

Zechariah 1:1

*In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo:*

(2) Call to repentance (2-6)

Zechariah 1:2-4

*“The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. <sup>3</sup> Therefore tell the people: This is what the **LORD Almighty** says: ‘Return to me,’ declares the **LORD Almighty**, ‘and I will return to you,’ says the **LORD Almighty**.*

*<sup>4</sup> Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the **LORD Almighty** says: ‘Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.’ But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD.”*

b. Vision 1: Angelic Horsemen (1:7-17)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Red-horse Rider among the Myrtles	1:7-17	God’s anger against the nations and blessing on restored Israel

(1) The vision (7-15)

Zechariah 1:8-10

*During the night I had a vision, and there before me was a man mounted on a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses. <sup>9</sup> I asked, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who was talking with me answered, "I will show you what they are." <sup>10</sup> Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, "They are the ones the LORD has sent to go throughout the earth."*

Zechariah 1:14-15

*Then the angel who was speaking to me said, "Proclaim this word: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, <sup>15</sup> and I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they went too far with the punishment.'"*

(2) The promise (16-17)

Zechariah 1:16-17

*"Therefore this is what the LORD says: 'I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,' declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>17</sup> "Proclaim further: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.'"*

c. Vision 2: Four Horns/Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Four Horns and the Four Craftsmen	1:18-21	God's judgment on the nations that afflict Israel

(1) The vision

Zechariah 1:18-21

*Then I looked up, and there before me were four horns. <sup>19</sup> I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these?" He answered me, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem."*

*<sup>20</sup> Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. <sup>21</sup> I asked, "What are these coming to do?" He answered, "These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise their head, but the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people."*

(2) The significance

This may relate to the dream-visions of Daniel 2, 7. E. Merrill (*NOTS*, 823) suggests:

<u>Four Horns</u>		<u>Four Craftsmen</u>
Babylon	← destroyed	Medo-Persia
Medo-Persia	← destroyed	Greece
Greece	← destroyed	Rome
Rome	← will destroy	God's Messianic Kingdom

d. Vision 3: Man with Measuring Line (2:1-13)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Surveyor with a Measuring Line	2:1-13	God's future blessing on restored Israel

Eugene Merrill (*NOTS*, 823) summarizes the vision and meaning:

In his third vision Zechariah asked a man with a measuring line where he was going, and he answered that he was on his way to “measure Jerusalem.” Then the angel explained the meaning of the vision: Jerusalem will again be rebuilt and will overflow with people. Physical walls will be unnecessary because God will be “a wall of fire around it.” The heavenly being urged those Jews still living in the “land of the north” to flee and return to Zion. They should do so because God will judge those nations that have persecuted His people, and because God will again live among His people in the Promised Land.

e. Vision 4: Cleansing of High Priest (3:1-10)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Cleansing and Crowning of Joshua the High Priest	3:1-10	Israel's future cleansing from sin and reinstatement as a priestly nation

(1) Vision (1-5)

Zechariah 3:1-4

*Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. <sup>2</sup> The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?" <sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. <sup>4</sup> The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you."*

(2) Message (6-10)

Zechariah 3:8-9

*"Listen, High Priest Joshua, you and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. <sup>9</sup> See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it," says the LORD Almighty, 'and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.'"*

f. Vision 5: Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (4:1-14)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Golden Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees	4:1-14	Israel as the light to the nations under Messiah, the King-Priest

(1) Vision (1-5)

Zechariah 4:2-3

*He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. <sup>3</sup> Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left."*

(2) Explanation (6-10)

(a) First Oracle (6-7)

Zechariah 4:6-7

*So he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty. <sup>7</sup> "What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'"*

(b) Second Oracle (11-14)

Zechariah 4:12, 14

*Again I asked him, "What are these two olive branches beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil?"... So he said, "These are the two who are anointed to serve the LORD of all the earth."*

g. Vision 6: The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Flying Scroll	5:1-4	The severity and totality of divine judgment on individual Israelites

- (1) Vision (1-2)  
A vision of a thirty foot long, fifteen foot wide scroll was seen.
- (2) Explanation (3-4)  
A curse is placed upon violators of the law of God.

h. Vision 7: Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
Woman in the Ephah (i.e. a measuring basket)	5:5-11	The removal of national Israel's sin of rebellion against God

The woman represents wickedness. She is in the large basket secured by a lead cover. "This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land" (6). The removal of wickedness and sin was a gracious act of God for the nation.

i. Vision 8: Four Chariots (6:1-8)

Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Four Chariots	6:1-8	Divine judgment on Gentile nations

The eighth vision predicted judgment upon the nations that had mistreated Israel.

j. Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)

Zechariah 6:12-13  
*"Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says:  
 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch,  
 and he will branch out from his place and build*

*the temple of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’”*

The symbolic act of crowning Joshua foreshadows the future Messianic King-Priest. Note the Messianic implications:

Note: The Branch (cf. Isa 4:2; 11:1; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Zech 3:8) is prophetically identified:

- (1) Man (12)
- (2) Place (12)
- (3) Build the Millennial Temple (13)
- (4) Majesty (13)
- (5) Rule/reign (13)
- (6) Priest (13)
- (7) Peace (harmony) (13)

Note:

This completes Zechariah 1-6 which is Part One to this prophetic book. Chapters 7-14 are covered in Session 5 which follows. The Points to Ponder for Zechariah will be given at the end of Session 5.



## **Session 4**

# **Appended Material**

## Session 4: Appended Material - A

ZECHARIAH					
8 Visions		4 Messages		2 Burdens	
1	6	7	8	9	14
1:1	1:6	#1 “Empty Ritualism”	7:1	7:7	Theme Messiah’s and Israel’s Future
#1 Angelic horsemen	1:7				
#2 Four horns/four craftsmen	1:18				
#3 Man with measuring line	2:1	#2 “Past Disobedience”	7:8	14	#1  Advent and Rejection of the Messiah (First Coming)
2:13	2:13				
#4 Cleansing of High Priest	3:1				
3:10	3:10	#3 “Restoration and Encouragement”	8:1	8:17	#2  Advent and Acceptance of the Messiah (Second Coming)
#5 Golden lampstand and two olive trees	4:1				
4:14	4:14				
#6 The flying scroll	5:1	#4 “Joy in the Future Kingdom”	8:18	8:23	12:1
5:4	5:4				
#7 Woman in the basket	5:5				
5:11	5:11	14:21	14:21	14:21	14:21
#8 Four chariots	6:1				
6:8	6:8				
Crowning of Joshua	6:9	Pictures	Problems	Predictions	Predictions
6:15	6:15				
8:18	8:18				

## Session 4: Appended Material - B

ZECHARIAH'S EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS		
Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Red-horse Rider among the Myrtles	1:7-17	God's anger against the nations and blessing on restored Israel
The Four Horns and the Four Craftsmen	1:18-21	God's judgment on the nations that afflict Israel
The Surveyor with a Measuring Line	Chapter 2	God's future blessing on restored Israel
The Cleansing and Crowning of Joshua the High Priest	Chapter 3	Israel's future cleansing from sin and reinstatement as a priestly nation
The Golden Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees	Chapter 4	Israel as the light to the nations under Messiah, the King-Priest
The Flying Scroll	5:1-4	The severity and totality of divine judgment on individual Israelites
The woman in the Ephah	5:5-11	The removal of national Israel's sin of rebellion against God
The Four Chariots	6:1-8	Divine judgment on Gentile nations

(Taken from Lindsey, *BKC:OT*, 1549)

### Suggested Chiastic Structure (J. Baldwin as quoted by Constable, *Notes*, 14)

- A** The horseman among the myrtle trees (1:7-17)
- B** The four horns and the four smiths (1:18-21)
- C** The surveyor (ch. 2)
- D** The cleansing and restoration of Joshua (ch. 3)
- D'** The gold lampstand and the two olive trees (ch. 4)
- C'** The flying scroll (5:1-4)
- B'** The woman in the basket (5:5-11)
- A'** The four chariots (6:1-8)

# SESSION 5

## Zechariah—Part Two

### I. PRAYER/REVIEW

### II. CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING

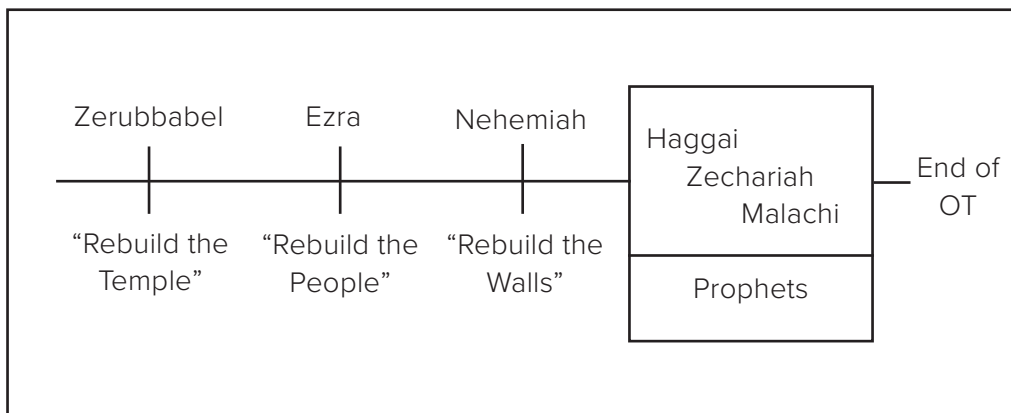
538-515 BC	483-473 BC	457 BC	444-425 BC
Zerubbabel	Esther	Ezra	Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6	Book of Esther	Ezra 7-10	Book of Nehemiah
First Return	In Persia	Second Return	Third Return

— Haggai (520 BC)

— Zechariah (520<sup>ff</sup> BC)

— Malachi (ca 433-31 BC)

### III. PANORAMA PLUS 9 TIMELINE



## IV. CHARTS: BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

### A. Broad Overview (8+4+2):

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH					
8 Visions		4 Messages		2 Burdens	
1	6	7	8	9	14
Pictures		Problems		Predictions	

### B. Detailed Chart

For a more comprehensive look at Zechariah, refer to the chart in Session 4: Appended Material A, page 115.

## V. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT

### A. Four Messages (7:1-8:23)

1. “Empty Ritualism” (7:1-7)
  - a. A question: “the word of the Lord came” (1-3)

Zechariah 7:1-3

*In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, the month of Kislev.*

<sup>2</sup> *The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melek, together with their men, to entreat the LORD <sup>3</sup> by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, “Should I mourn and fast in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?”*

(1) The prophetic message came almost two years after the eight (8) visions of Chapters 1-6.

(2) The people's question concerned the practice of fasting during the exile commemorating the destruction of the first temple (cf. Jer 52:12-13). This was not a Mosaic law requirement (only the fast at the Day of Atonement—Lev 16:29; 23:27-32). Since the new Temple was about half-finished, should the Lord's people continue to fast?

b. An answer: "the word of the Lord Almighty came" (4-7)

The reply and three more messages to follow all begin with the authoritative, "the word of the Lord (Almighty) came."

Zechariah 7:4-7

*Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me: <sup>5</sup> "Ask all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted?*

*<sup>6</sup> And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves? <sup>7</sup> Are these not the words the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?"*

(1) The Lord challenged the motives of those who fasted (5-6). As always, God seeks the reality (authentic), not meaningless ritual in worship. Note the earlier prophetic words of Isaiah (perhaps around 700 BC).

Isaiah 1:11-17

*"The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?" says the LORD. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs*

*and goats.<sup>12</sup> When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts?<sup>13</sup> Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me.*

*New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—  
I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.*

*<sup>14</sup> Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.<sup>15</sup> When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!<sup>16</sup> Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong.<sup>17</sup> Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”*

Likewise, Amos shared the revealed, prophetic word and the religious hypocrisy to the northern kingdom (Israel).

Amos 5:21-23

*“I hate, I despise your religious festivals;  
your assemblies are a stench to me.*

*<sup>22</sup> Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them.*

*<sup>23</sup> Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps.”*

- (2) The prophets (before the captivities) had preached against self-serving attitudes of selfishness, the very condition that exiles were exhibiting. People went through the motions of worship and serving God, but it was “empty ritualism.”

2. “Past Disobedience” (7:8-14)

The second message continues the thought. Past generations had heard the corrective words of the prophets but ignored them. This attitude and resultant actions are evident again in the Lord’s people in exile.

a. Lord’s past words of exhortation (8-10)

Zechariah 7:8-10

*And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah: <sup>9</sup> “This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. <sup>10</sup> Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’”*

b. People’s past response of disobedience (11-12)

(1) “Refused to pay attention”... “turned their backs and stopped up their ears” (11)

(2) Hardened their hearts (“as hard as flint”) (12)

(3) “Would not listen” to Mosaic Law or prophetic words (12)

Result? “So the Lord Almighty was very angry” (12)

c. Lord’s past judgment of exile into captivity (13-14)

Zechariah 7:14

*“I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land they left behind them was so desolate that no one traveled through it. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.”*

The theological point: don’t follow in the footsteps of ritualism and disobedience. The Lord will not leave his people unpunished.

3. “Restoration and Encouragement” (8:1-17)

The third message anticipates not only the ongoing return to the land and the very important task of rebuilding the Temple, it sees in this a precursor to the future blessings of the coming, far-future millennial kingdom.



This message (#3) is structured by the seven (7) occurrences of “this is what the Lord Almighty says.” The six authoritative introductions (words) are preceded by the introduction to the third message, “Again the word of the Lord Almighty came to me” (1).

- a. Word #1: Jealous for Zion (2)

Zechariah 8:2

***This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her.”***

- b. Word #2: Future return to Zion (3)

Zechariah 8:3

***This is what the LORD says: “I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain.”***

- c. Word #3: Future tranquility of Jerusalem (4-5)

Zechariah 8:4-5

***This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. <sup>5</sup> The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.”***

- d. Word #4: Surety of the Lord’s words (6)

What the Lord promised in the future for His people might seem impossible (NIV: “marvelous”), but no more so than the threats of exile were to the stubborn people of the past.

- e. Word #5: Future regathering to Jerusalem (7-8)

Zechariah 8:7-8

***This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. <sup>8</sup> I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.”***

Note also Jeremiah 30:7-11

*How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it. <sup>8</sup> “‘In that day,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘I will break the yoke off their necks and will tear off their bonds; no longer will foreigners enslave them. <sup>9</sup> Instead, they will serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them. <sup>10</sup> “‘So do not be afraid, Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, Israel,’ declares the LORD. ‘I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid. <sup>11</sup> I am with you and will save you,’ declares the LORD. ‘Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only in due measure; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.’”*

- f. Word #6: Future blessings to come—part one (9-13)

Zechariah 8:9, 11-12

***This is what the LORD Almighty says:*** “Now hear these words, ‘Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.’ This is also what the prophets said who were present when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty... But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past,” declares the LORD Almighty. <sup>12</sup> “The seed will grow well, the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of this people.

- g. Word #7: Future blessings to come - part two (14-17)

Zechariah 8:14-15

***This is what the LORD Almighty says:*** “Just as I had determined to bring disaster on you and

*showed no pity when your ancestors angered me,” says the LORD Almighty, <sup>15</sup> “so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid.”*

Further, the Lord reiterated the righteous deeds expected of His blessed people:

- (1) “Speak the truth” (16)
- (2) “Render true and sound judgments” (in the courts) (16)
- (3) “Do not plot evil” (17)
- (4) “Do not... swear falsely” (17)

#### 4. “Joy in the Future Kingdom” (8:18-23)

In this final (and fourth) message, the subject returns to fasting, the very question posed in 7:1-3. With prophetic anticipation of the far future day of blessing, at that time the “fastings” of the past will become the “feastings” of the future time of blessing.

Once again, as in the previous section, each of the three (3) sections begin with “the Lord Almighty says.”

##### a. Word #1: Future joy (18-19)

Zechariah 8:18-19

***The word of the LORD Almighty came to me.***

<sup>19</sup> *This is what the LORD Almighty says: “The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.”*

Since the recent fast of mourning will soon turn to joy (as the Temple will soon be completed), this happy occasion also foreshadows the extreme joy of the Messianic Millennial Kingdom. Therefore, in anticipation, the Lord’s people should exhibit what the Kingdom will be: “Therefore, love truth and peace” (19).

- b. Word #2: Future esteemed status of Jerusalem (20-22)

Zechariah 8:22

*And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him.”*

- c. Word #3: Future esteemed status of Jews (23)

Zechariah 8:23

***This is what the LORD Almighty says:*** *“In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”*

## **B. Two Burdens (9:1-14:21)**

The basic theme of these last 6 chapters of Zechariah concern Messiah and Israel’s future. The first three chapters (Zech 9-11) generally deal with the “Advent and Rejection of the Messiah.” The final three (Zech 12-14) picture the “Advent and Acceptance of the Messiah.” These final burdens (or oracles) may have been written after the completion of the rebuilt Temple (though there are no specific chronological markers).

Common to this section is the phrase **“on that day”** which occurs 18 times. This is a common eschatological phrase which can mean near, far or far, far future (which is likely the case in Zechariah 9-14). Additionally, there is a stylistic change in writing. Merrill (quoted by *Constable*, 57) notes a “change of mood, outlook, style and composition” that sets it off from the first eight chapters. Some see this as the hand of a new author, but there are some parallels to Zechariah 1-8 (cf. Lindsey, *BKC:OT*, 1561). Therefore, it is best to see one author whose style changes as the content of the Lord’s revelation changes.

Eugene Merrill (*NOTS*, 827) suggests the following chiastic structure for Zechariah 9-14:

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### **Chiasm of Zechariah 9-14**

- A. God comes to protect and bless (chapters 9-10)
  - B. The people reject God's shepherd (11:1-14)
    - C. The worthless shepherd hurts the flock (11:15-17)
    - C.' The nations come to destroy Jerusalem (12:1-9)
  - B.' The people repent and turn to God (12:10-13:6)
  - A.' God comes to protect and bless (13:7-14:21)
- 

#### **1. Advent and Rejection of the Messiah (9:1-11:17)**

##### **a. Messiah's coming (9:1-17)**

##### **(1) Judgment upon certain nations (1-8)**

Behind the unfolding revelations of Israel's Messiah to come was the hidden, sovereign hand of God. Certain empires would rise and fall leading to the appointed time of the Christ (i.e. Messiah). These empires would intersect with God's chosen people and their rise and fall was predicted by the prophet Daniel. Note the compatible prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 (as seen in the following charts). Consider that God uses the nations (and their leaders) to accomplish His greater purposes.

DANIEL 2 (Statue)		
Parts	Composition	Reference
Head	Gold	Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar)
Chest/Arms	Silver	Medo-Persia
Belly/Thighs	Bronze	Greece
Legs	Iron	Rome (1st Coming)
-----	-----	-----
Feet	Partly Iron Partly Clay	Revised "Rome" (2nd Coming)
<div> <div>Rock (Stone)</div> <div>→</div> <div>Statue</div> <div>→</div> <div>Huge Mountain (Messianic Kingdom)</div> </div>		

<b>DANIEL 7 (Four Beasts)</b>		
<b>Beast</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Lion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winged like an eagle</li> <li>• Wings plucked off</li> </ul>	Babylon (humbling of Nebuchadnezzar)
Bear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raised up - on one side</li> <li>• 3 ribs in mouth</li> </ul>	Medo-Persia (Persia more dominant)
Leopard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four Wings</li> <li>• Four Heads</li> </ul>	Greece (Swift conquest) (post-Alexander split)
Terrifying Beast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iron teeth</li> </ul>	Rome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten horns</li> <li>• Little horn</li> </ul>	(Rome-revised) (Antichrist - Rev 13:1-10)
Son of Man's Dominion: Future Messianic Kingdom		

In light of Daniel's prophetic predictions of the four kingdoms that would subjugate the Jews, nonetheless the sovereign hand of God was moving world events and preserving God's people for their promised destiny. God would use foreign invaders to punish nations and even Israel (Assyria) and Judah (Babylon). Zechariah 9 predicts the arrival of Alexander the Great to bring punishment upon Damascus (Syria), Tyre and Sidon, and the five key Philistine cities (9:1-7). Each of these had oppressed Israel in the past. But in the midst of this invading mayhem, God would protect His people.

Zechariah 9:8

*But I will encamp at my temple to guard it against marauding forces. Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I am keeping watch.*

Note that “never again” refers to a future time of divine protection, a time of the millennial reign of the Messiah.

Joel 3:17

*“Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her.”*

(2) Advent of the Messiah (prophetically)  
(9:9-10)

(a) First coming: far future (about 500 years)

Zechariah 9:9

*Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

This was literally fulfilled in the Triumphal Entry of Jesus commencing the last week of His earthly life.

Matthew 21:1-5 (also Mk 11; Lk 19; Jn 12)

*As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”*

<sup>4</sup> *This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: <sup>5</sup> “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to*



*you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

The reader of Zechariah would not expect the prophetic focus to move from first coming to second, but as can happen in prophetic literature (cf. Isa 61:1-2<sup>a</sup> and 2<sup>b</sup>), the prophet now moves forward.

- (b) Second coming: far, far future (about 2,500 years...)

Zechariah 9:10 (cf. Rev 19:11-16)  
*I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

- (3) Protection of God’s People (9:11-17)

This section of Zechariah proves to be difficult to understand. Perhaps, these descriptive verses look to the “relatively” near future of the Maccabean rebellion for independence from the Greek Seleucid dynasty (2nd century BC). This partial fulfillment would precede the far, far future completion at the time of the Second Coming (cf. 9:13-17).

Since this passage has a double-fulfillment, the far, far future fulfillment could perhaps be summarized in verse 16.

Zechariah 9:16  
*The LORD their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown.*

b. Messiah's care (10:1-11:3)

Zechariah 9 focused on the true king that would come. Chapter 10 spotlights the people of the Messiah. Again, this passage seems to cast a “near” and “far” view. The near would be the Hebrew independence under the Maccabees. The far view would be the reign of the true king in the Davidic, Millennial Kingdom. Note the following insights.

(1) False worship negates the Lord's blessings (10:1-2<sup>a</sup>).

(2) False worship brings the Lord's anger against false shepherds (leaders) (10:2<sup>b</sup>-3).

Zechariah 10:2<sup>b</sup>

*Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd.*

(3) True Messiah will enable His people to defeat their foes (10:4-5).

(4) True Messiah will strengthen His people (10:6-12).

Zechariah 10:6

*“I will strengthen Judah and save the tribes of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.*

Zechariah 10:9-10, 12

*“Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return. <sup>10</sup> I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them... I will strengthen them in the LORD and in his name they will live securely, declares the LORD.”*

(5) True Messiah will first bring wrath (before blessings can come) (11:1-3).

c. Good Shepherd and Foolish Shepherd (11:4-17)

This passage is a kind of allegory. Zechariah is instructed to dramatically portray the Good Shepherd who is sent to God's people. As this shepherd, he carries two staffs, "Favor" (God's blessings) and "Union" (the oneness/unity of the nation). But the people (flock) reject the Shepherd that God sent (4-14). The Good Shepherd breaks the staffs.

Next, Zechariah takes on the dramatic role of the foolish shepherd (15-17) who abuses and oppresses the sheep. Prophetically this will be fulfilled in the coming Antichrist (Rev 13:3, 12).

Zechariah 11:17

*"Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered, his right eye totally blinded!"*

2. Advent and Acceptance of the Messiah (12:1-14:21)

The content of the final three chapters of Zechariah focus primarily on the Second Coming. The phrase "in that day" forecasts the far, far future (occurs 15 times).

a. Future day: physical deliverance (12:1-9)

Eugene Merrill (NOTS, 830) offers this summary:

"As the end approaches, God will make Jerusalem a 'cup' that will cause nations to reel. Jerusalem also will be a rock on which the nations will 'injure themselves' as they try to move it. Jerusalem will take center stage as Israel secures its control over the city while other nations try to 'attack' it."

Zechariah 12:2-5

*"I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling.*

*Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem.*

*<sup>3</sup> On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem*

*an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. <sup>4</sup> On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness,” declares the LORD. “I will keep a watchful eye over Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. <sup>5</sup> Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.’”*

b. Future day: spiritual deliverance (12:10-13:6)

- (1) Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (12:10<sup>a</sup>)
- (2) Through the mourning over the death of the crucified Messiah (12:10<sup>b</sup>-14)

*Zechariah 12:10<sup>b</sup>-11*

*“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. <sup>11</sup> On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be as great as the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.*

Note the key passages that relate to these significant verses.

*Isaiah 53:4-6*

*Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

*<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Psalm 22:6-8, 16-18

*But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. <sup>7</sup> All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. <sup>8</sup> "He trusts in the LORD," they say, "let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."...*

*Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. <sup>17</sup> All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. <sup>18</sup> They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.*

- (3) Through the cleansing of the nation (Israel) (13:1-6)

Zechariah 13:1-2

*"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity. <sup>2</sup> "On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more," declares the LORD Almighty. "I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land."*

- c. Future day: the coming of the Messiah-King (13:7-14:21)

- (1) Flashback: the Shepherd struck (13:7-9)

In a reference to the previous passage on the Good Shepherd (11:4-14), verse 7 speaks of the striking of the Shepherd, a prophetic reference to the crucifixion. The sheep who scatter likely refers to the dispersion of the Jews at the time of Jerusalem's destruction.

- (2) Flash-forward: the King returns (14:1-21)
    - (a) To rescue Jerusalem (1-8; 12-15): End of the Tribulation

Zechariah 14:3-4 (cf. 12-15)

*Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. <sup>4</sup> On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.*

(b) To establish the Kingdom (9-11, 16-21)

Zechariah 14:9, 16

*The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name... Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles.*

## **VI. POINTS TO PONDER**

### **A. Fulfilled Prophecies**

The book of Zechariah makes a number of Messianic predictions that were fulfilled in His “first coming.” Additionally, there are many “second coming” prophecies awaiting fulfillment. If God can promise/predict and then bring about/fulfill, then He is all-knowing and holds the future in His hands. Can you trust a faithful God such as this?

### **B. Christological Pictures**

“Zechariah presents Christ as the angel of the Lord (3:1), the Righteous Branch (3:8), the Crucified Savior (12:10) and the Coming King (9:9)” (N. Geisler, 295).

### **C. Right to Rule**

As mentioned frequently before, one of the fundamental questions of the Scriptures is the theological query, “Who has the right to rule?” Zechariah demonstrates that God has that right.

He is the God of history, of prophecy and fulfillment, of judgment and deliverance, of sacrifice and provision for man's sin. Indeed, He alone has the right to rule and reign.

Will you let Him?

# SESSION 6

## The Book of Malachi

### I. PRAYER/REVIEW

### II. PANORAMA MOVEMENTS 1-9 (OLD TESTAMENT)

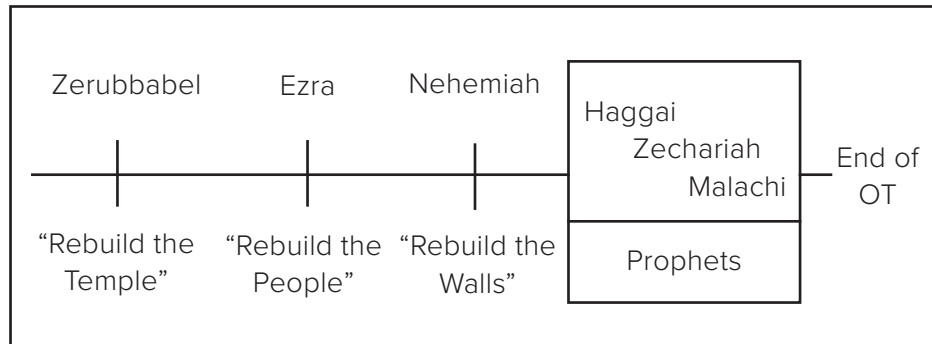
PANORAMA: MOVEMENTS 1-9	
Movement	Biblical Books
#1 Prologue	Genesis 1-11
#2 Patriarchs	Genesis 12-50; Job
#3 Redemption and Wanderings	Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
#4 Conquest	Joshua
#5 Apostasy	Judges, Ruth
#6 Kingship: United Monarchy	1-2 Samuel; 1 Kings 1-11 (Pss, Prov, Eccl, Song of Solomon)
#7 Kingship: Divided Monarchy	1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings (Prophets - selected)
#8 Exile	Ezekiel, Daniel (Jeremiah)
<b>#9 Return from Exile and 400 Silent Years</b>	<b>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)</b>

**Note:**

Movements 1-9 comprise the Old Testament. Between Movement 9 and Movement 10 (Life of Christ) lie the four hundred years of silence (no revelations from God through angels, prophets, or other means).



### III. PANORAMA MOVEMENT 9 TIMELINE



### IV. CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING

538-515 BC		483-473 BC		457 BC		444-425 BC
Zerubbabel		Esther		Ezra		Nehemiah
Ezra 1-6		Book of Esther		Ezra 7-10		Book of Nehemiah
First Return		In Persia		Second Return		Third Return

Haggai (520 BC)  
 Zechariah (520<sup>ff</sup> BC)

Malachi  
 (ca 433-31 BC)

### V. THE BOOK OF MALACHI

#### A. Author

The last book of the Old Testament was written by Malachi whose name means "my messenger." Since prophets were commonly seen as messengers of the Lord and given that 3:1 states, "I will send my

messenger...”, some scholars believe that Malachi in 1:1 refers not to a specific person, but to an unnamed prophetic “messenger.” If true, then this is the only prophetic book in the Hebrew Scriptures that is anonymous. This is unlikely and it seems best to ascribe the book to the prophet Malachi.

Of the prophet’s background, there is no Biblical data concerning his home, vocation, lineage, or ancestral roots.

## **B. Theme**

Malachi addressed the returnees from the captivity to Babylon (later Persia). The revival and repentance under Ezra had waned and the people had entered a time of spiritual apathy and sin. Much of the book is structured around a statement by God, a defensive challenge for clarity by the people and a strong refutation by God. Further, in this book of confrontation, the challenge of the prophetic message was to return and be faithful to the Lord as the people await God’s future messenger who would proclaim the coming day of the Lord.

## **C. Dates**

### **1. Date of composition**

Malachi’s prophecy contains no historical markers by which to date with certainty the time of composition. While conservative scholars offer various suggestions, a date of writing around 433-31 seems reasonable.

### **2. Contextual dates (Ez/Neh/Est/Hag/Zech/Mal)**

See IV. “Chronological Setting” on page 138. Note the placement of Malachi.

## D. Structure

1. A suggested “chiasm” (Constable quoting Stuart, 7).

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### Malachi - Chiasm

- A** Superscription (1:1): Yahweh has a message for Israel.
  - B** First Disputation (1:2-5): God distinguishes between the good and the wicked. The proof of His love is His sparing the righteous and condemning the wicked.
  - C** Second Disputation (1:6-2:9): Condemnation of improper, begrudging offerings, promise of reversal of blessing, and the greatness of Yahweh’s name among the nations.
  - D** Third Disputation (2:10-16): The Lord is witness to marital fidelity, and Judah is unfaithful.
  - D’** Fourth Disputation (2:17-3:6): The Lord is witness to marital fidelity, and Judah is unfaithful.
  - C’** Fifth Disputation (3:7-12): Condemnation of improper, begrudging offerings, promise of reversal of blessing, and the greatness of Yahweh’s name among the nations.
  - B’** Sixth Disputation (3:13-4:3): God distinguishes between the good and the wicked. The proof of His love is His sparing the righteous and condemning the wicked.
  - A’** Summary challenge (4:4-6): Yahweh has a message for Israel.
-

## 2. Chart

MALACHI						
Chapters 1-3						Chapter 4
Six (6) Oracles						Day of the Lord
#1 LORD's Love for Israel  1:1    1:5	#2 Sins of the Priests  1:6    2:9	#3 Sins of the People  2:10   2:16	#4 Questioning God's Justice  2:17       3:6	#5 Robbing God  3:7    3:12	#6 Arrogance vs Humility  3:13    3:18	Day of the Lord Coming  4:1       4:3  God to Send Elijah  4:4       4:6
Past	Present					Future

### E. Brief Outline: Book of Malachi

The following outline is based upon the previous chart. It also serves as the structure for the "Biblical Development" which follows.

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## Outline of Malachi

### I. SIX (6) ORACLES (Chapters 1-3)

Each of the six distinct oracles in this book consist of an opening “statement” made by the Lord. This is followed by a “challenge” or defensive question of the people then the “refutation” by the Lord.

#### A. Oracle 1: The Lord’s Love of Israel (1:1-5)

#### B. Oracle 2: Sins of the Priests (1:6-2:9)

1. Their corrupted worship (1:6-14)
2. Their corrupted teaching (2:1-9)

#### C. Oracle 3: Sins of the People (2:10-16)

#### D. Oracle 4: Questioning God’s Justice (2:17-3:5)

#### E. Oracle 5: Robbing God (3:6-12)

#### F. Oracle 6: Arrogance vs Humility (3:13-18)

### II. DAY OF THE LORD (Chapter 4)

#### A. Announcement of Its Coming (4:1-3)

#### B. Pronouncement of Elijah’s Coming (4:4-6)

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## VI. BIBLICAL DEVELOPMENT

### A. Six (6) Oracles (1:1-3:18)

1. Oracle 1: The Lord’s Love for Israel (1:1-5)

Malachi 1:1

*A prophecy: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.*

“Oracle” is the Hebrew word, *massa’*. It is translated as oracle or burden and is found 27 times in the Prophets. It is a threatening pronouncement.

- a. Statement (by the Lord)

Malachi 1:2<sup>a</sup>

*“I have loved you,” says the LORD.*

b. Challenge (by the people)

Malachi 1:<sup>b</sup>

*“But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’ ‘Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ declares the LORD.*

- (1) The condition of the people after the return from exile was not what they expected. They were still a subjugated people and the promised Messianic age seemed as distant as always.
- (2) The questioning of God’s love demonstrated a general sense of faithlessness, perhaps in God and His promised words.

c. Refutation (by the Lord)

Malachi 1:2<sup>c</sup>-5

*“Yet I have loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his hill country into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals.” <sup>4</sup> Edom may say, “Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins.” But this is what the LORD Almighty says: “They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> You will see it with your own eyes and say, ‘Great is the LORD—even beyond the borders of Israel!’”*

- (1) God’s election (sovereign choice) of Jacob over Esau is in view. The use of “hate/love” is a common OT expression to refer to preferring or selecting one over another (cf. Gen 29:30-33; Deut 21:15-17; Lk 14:26).
- (2) Malachi 1:3-5 describes the destiny of Esau’s descendants (Edomites). While both Jacob (Israelites) and Esau (Edomites) would suffer under the Babylonian invasion and destruction, only Israel as God’s people would one day be blessed according to covenantal promises (see Deut 4:29-31). Why such harsh treatment? The prophet Obadiah catalogs the sins of the Edomites.

Obadiah 8-14

*“In that day,” declares the LORD, “will I not destroy the wise men of Edom, those of understanding in the mountains of Esau?*

*<sup>9</sup> Your warriors, Teman, will be terrified, and everyone in Esau’s mountains will be cut down in the slaughter. <sup>10</sup> Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. <sup>11</sup> On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. <sup>12</sup> You should not gloat over your brother in the day of his misfortune, nor rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their destruction, nor boast so much in the day of their trouble. <sup>13</sup> You should not march through the gates of my people in the day of their disaster, nor gloat over them in their calamity in the day of their disaster, nor seize their wealth in the day of their disaster. <sup>14</sup> You should not wait at the crossroads to cut down their fugitives, nor hand over their survivors in the day of their trouble.*

2. Oracle 2: Sins of the Priests (1:6-2:9)

a. Their corrupted worship (1:6-14)

(1) Statement (by the Lord)

Malachi 1:6<sup>a</sup>

*“A son honors his father, and a slave his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty. “It is you priests who show contempt for my name.”*

(2) Challenge—part one

Malachi 1:6<sup>b</sup>

*“But you ask, ‘How have we shown contempt for your name?’”*

(3) Refutation—part one

Malachi 1:7<sup>a</sup>

*“By offering defiled food on my altar.”*

(4) Challenge—part two

Malachi 1:7<sup>b</sup>

*“But you ask, ‘How have we defiled you?’*

*“By saying that the LORD’S table is contemptible.”*

(5) Refutation—part two

Malachi 1:8-9

*“When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the LORD Almighty. <sup>9</sup> “Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the LORD Almighty.”*

- (a) These offerings were grossly inappropriate by Mosaic Law (Lev 22:18; Deut 15:21).
- (b) These offerings were unacceptable as an act of worship before God. Such paltry offerings were not fit for a governor’s table, much less so for God.
- (c) The priests (and the people) wanted God’s favor but such was denied in light of such trashy offerings.

Following the second oracle is a lament by God (10-14). In this section, four important statements are made.

- Under the present conditions, the Lord Almighty is not pleased and will not accept the defiled offerings (10).
- In contrast, the Lord Almighty deserves “pure offerings” commensurate with His great name (11).



- With the present corrupted practices, the Lord Almighty calls out the contemptuous attitude of the priests (12-13).
- Summary charge:

Malachi 1:14<sup>b</sup>

*“For I am a great king,” says the LORD Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.”*

b. Their corrupted teachings (2:1-9)

(1) Admonition: honor my name (or else)

Malachi 2:1-2

*“And now, you priests, this warning is for you. <sup>2</sup> If you do not listen, and if you do not resolve to honor my name,” says the LORD Almighty, “I will send a curse on you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have already cursed them, because you have not resolved to honor me.”*

(2) Appeal: recall the covenant of grant with Levi

Malachi 2:4-5

*“And you will know that I have sent you this warning so that my covenant with Levi may continue,” says the LORD Almighty. <sup>5</sup> “My covenant was with him, a covenant of life and peace, and I gave them to him; this called for reverence and he revered me and stood in awe of my name.”*

**Insight:**

The grievous signs of the priests with their blatant disregard of Mosaic stipulations led to the Lord's rebuke. What would follow would be judgment (2:3). But the Lord Almighty appealed to the special covenant with Levi, one who "stood in awe" of God's name.

This marks the beginning of four types of "covenants" (binding, contractual agreements) found in Malachi.

- (1) With Levi (2:4-5, 8)
- (2) Mosaic (2:10)
- (3) Marriage (2:14)
- (4) New (3:1)

- (3) Announcement: you despised Me, I despise you

Malachi 2:7-9

*"For the lips of a priest ought to preserve knowledge, because he is the messenger of the LORD Almighty and people seek instruction from his mouth. <sup>8</sup> But you have turned from the way and by your teaching have caused many to stumble; you have violated the covenant with Levi," says the LORD Almighty. <sup>9</sup> "So I have caused you to be despised and humiliated before all the people, because you have not followed my ways but have shown partiality in matters of the law."*

- 3. Oracle 3: Sins of the People (2:10-16)  
Previously, the sins of the priests had been highlighted (1:6-2:9). Now, the prophet addresses the people.
  - a. The general charge of unfaithfulness (10)

Malachi 2:10

*Do we not all have one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our ancestors by being unfaithful to one another?*

- (1) Unlike previous oracles the style changes from “statement-challenge-refutation” to three rhetorical questions.
  - (2) “Breaking faith” carries the meaning of acting in an unfaithful manner with respect to an agreement or covenant. It can also mean to act treacherously as in interpersonal conflicts. Thus, note the phrase, “breaking faith with one another.”
- b. The specific charge concerning mixed marriages (11-12)

Malachi 2:11-12

*Judah has been unfaithful. A detestable thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves by marrying women who worship a foreign god.<sup>12</sup> As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the Lord remove him from the tents of Jacob—even though he brings an offering to the LORD Almighty.*

- (1) Judah (the people) had “broken faith.”
- (2) Judah had done a “detestable thing.”
- (3) Judah had “desecrated the sanctuary.”
- (4) (Because) Judah had married foreign women who worshiped a “foreign god.”
- (5) (Therefore) Judah would be judged (“cut him off from the tents of Jacob”).

### **Insight: Mixed Marriages**

Note the following quote by E. Merrill in *NOTS*, 838-39.

Mixed marriages were expressly forbidden in the Mosaic Law. Invariably they led to apostasy and ultimately idolatry. (Ex 34:15-16; Deut 7:1-4).

- The prophet Balaam, who was prohibited from cursing Israel (Num 22:12), still brought God's judgment on Israel by encouraging the Moabite and Midianite women to entice Israel into idolatry through sexual immorality (Num 25:1-18). His wicked advice was later called the "teaching of Balaam" (Rev 2:14).
- After the Conquest, Joshua warned Israel not to intermarry with pagans who remained in the land, because it would ultimately bring God's judgment (Josh 23:12-13).
- King Solomon "loved many foreign women," and they "turned his heart after other gods," bringing God's judgment on him and his kingdom (1 Kings 11:1-5, 9-12).
- Ezra rebuked the people for intermarrying with their pagan neighbors. He forced them to "send away" the foreign spouses (Ezra 9:1-10:17).
- Twenty-five years after Ezra's reforms Nehemiah reacted violently to news that the remnant were again intermarrying with their pagan neighbors (Neh 13:23-27).

#### c. The specific charge concerning divorce (13-16<sup>a</sup>)

Within this section of the sins of the people, the prophet returns to the familiar oracular structure seen previously.

(1) Statement (of the prophet for the Lord)

Malachi 2:13

*Another thing you do: You flood the LORD'S altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands.*

(2) Challenge (of the people)

Malachi 2:14

*You ask, "Why?"*

(3) Refutation (by the prophet)

Malachi 2:14-15

*It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. <sup>15</sup> Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.*

Observe these noteworthy points:

- The marriage covenant is sacred.
- The marriage covenant is binding.
- The marriage covenant is a type of contractual agreement.
- The marriage covenant is ideally introduced in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:24

*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*

The strong summary statement from Malachi 2:16<sup>a</sup> concludes the matter. "I hate divorce, says the Lord God of Israel."

**Insight:**

Note the comments of C. Blaising, *BKC:OT*, 1582.

This verse is the most explicit statement in the Old Testament on God's feelings about divorce. Divorce was allowed but actually the instructions in that passage (Deut 24:1-4) were given to protect the wife if a divorce should occur. Jesus taught that those concessions by Moses were given because of the hardness of people's hearts, but He emphasized that God does not approve of divorce (Matt 19:7-9), though some Bible scholars see some bases for exceptions to this ideal.

For further study, see Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-24.

4. Oracle 4: Questioning God's Justice (2:17-3:5)

a. Statement

Malachi 2:17<sup>a</sup>

*You have wearied the LORD with your words.*

b. Challenge

Malachi 2:17<sup>b</sup>

*"How have we wearied him?" you ask.*

c. Refutation

Malachi 2:17<sup>c</sup>

*By saying, "All who do evil are good in the eyes of the LORD, and he is pleased with them" or "Where is the God of justice?"*

d. Warning (3:1-5)

- (1) Coming: A sent messenger for preparation  
(1<sup>a</sup>)

Malachi 3:1<sup>a</sup>

*"I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me."*

Isaiah 40:3

*A voice of one calling: "In the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God."*

John 1:19-23

*Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. <sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup> They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"*

- (2) Coming: the Lord for judgment (1<sup>b</sup>-5)

Malachi 3:1<sup>b</sup>-2

*"Then suddenly the LORD you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap.*

Note this. The coming messenger (3:1<sup>a</sup>) will precede the coming of the Lord (3:1<sup>b</sup>-2). This was partially fulfilled in the First Coming but will be completely fulfilled in the Second Coming. Note that these descriptions speak of judgment, not explicit when Jesus first appeared but will be so in the Second Coming (cf. Isa 2:12; Joel 3:11-16; Amos 5:18-21; Zech 1:14-18; so forth).

5. Oracle 5: Robbing God (3:6-12)

There is a bridge between the coming judgment of the previous verses and the introduction of the fifth oracle. As often with judgment passages, there follows a basis for hope in God.

Malachi 3:6

*"I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed."*

a. Statement—part one

Malachi 3:7<sup>a</sup>

*"Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty."*

b. Challenge—part one

Malachi 3:7<sup>b</sup>

*"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'"*

c. Statement—part two

Malachi 3:8<sup>a</sup>

*"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me."*

d. Challenge—part two

Malachi 3:8<sup>b</sup>

*"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'"*

e. Refutation

Malachi 3:8<sup>c</sup>

*"In tithes and offerings"*



The prophet expands the brief refutation with a discussion of how the people had neglected their responsibilities to the Lord and to His house.

Malachi 3:9-10

*“You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me.<sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.”*

6. Oracle 6: Arrogance vs Humility (3:13-18)

a. Statement (by the Lord)

Malachi 3:13<sup>a</sup>

*“You have spoken arrogantly against me,” says the LORD.*

b. Challenge (by the people)

Malachi 3:13<sup>b</sup>

*“Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’”*

c. Refutation

Malachi 3:14

*“You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?’”*

This final oracle appears similar to the fourth (2:17-3:6). From questioning God’s justice in that the unrighteous seem to prosper and the righteous to suffer, now in the final oracle certain people were pronouncing the arrogant as blessed since evildoers prosper and the arrogant who challenge God’s goodness escape (14-15).

Apparently, though, some people who heard the Lord's rebuke through Malachi agreed to repent, even to the point of writing down their names and commitment upon "a scroll of remembrance" (16).

d. Judgment ("that day" - the Day of the Lord)

Malachi 3:17-18

*"On the day when I act," says the LORD Almighty, "they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. <sup>18</sup> And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not."*

Note the key points:

- (1) The Day of the Lord will be a day of judging the wicked and preserving the righteous (believing ones).
- (2) The Day of the Lord is prophetically described by Daniel.

Daniel 12:1-2

*"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. <sup>2</sup> Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."*

- (3) The Day of the Lord will precede the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, a day when God will bless His "treasured possession," i.e. Israel.

**Insight:**

On God's original intention and plans for Israel, note Exodus 19.

Exodus 19:5-6

*"Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, <sup>6</sup> you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."*

Also, see Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps 135:4.

**B. Day of the Lord**

The final broad section of Malachi highlights the coming of the Lord in judgment. The topic began in 3:17 with the key phrase, "in that day." What day? This obviously points to the Second Coming of Christ and the events leading to His appearance.

1. Announcement: the Day of the Lord (1-3)

- a. It will be a day of judgment (unrighteous).

Malachi 4:1

*“Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire,” says the LORD Almighty. “Not a root or a branch will be left to them.”*

- b. It will be a day of joy (righteous).

Malachi 4:2

*“But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves.”*

- c. It will be a day of vindication.

Malachi 4:3

*“Then you will trample on the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty.*

2. Promise: the coming Elijah (4-6)

- a. Present preparation (4-5)

Malachi 4:4-5

*“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. <sup>5</sup> “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.*

- (1) In the mean time, “remember” and therefore obey “the law of my servant Moses.” The basis of blessings for the covenant people was heart felt obedience to the Mosaic covenant (cf. Deut 28:1-2<sup>ff</sup>).
- (2) Also, in the mean time, the obedient were to look for the coming of Elijah before “that great and dreadful day.”

b. Future (Far Future) activity

Malachi 4:6

*“He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”*

3. Fulfillment: Elijah and John the Baptist

This concluding section will attempt to harmonize Malachi 3:1 (“my messenger”) with 4:5-6 (“will send you Elijah”).

Note the following observations:

- a. The messenger of Malachi 3:1 was fulfilled in the forerunner ministry of John the Baptist.

Matthew 11:7-10 (Jesus speaking)

*As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? <sup>8</sup> If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. <sup>9</sup> Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup> This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.”*

- b. John the Baptist does not strictly fulfill the prophecy of Malachi 4:5-6. The angel revealed to Zechariah (father of John) that John would have a notable ministry.

Luke 1:17

*“And he will go on before the Lord, **in the spirit and power** of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”*

Note that the angel seems to only indicate likeness to Elijah’s ministry, not fulfillment of

his ministry. Yet, in a sense, John was a type of the Elijah-figure, one who brought to mind the greater, future ministry of the past (now gone) prophet who will miraculously return to fulfill 4:5-6.

- c. John the Baptist denied that he was (literally) the ancient prophet.

John 1:19-23

*Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. <sup>20</sup> He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah." <sup>21</sup> They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." <sup>22</sup> Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" <sup>23</sup> John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"*

However, note that Jesus did connect the two individuals. Again, from Matthew 11 focus on this description of John given by Jesus.

Matthew 11:11-14

*Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. <sup>12</sup> From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence, and violent people have been raiding it. <sup>13</sup> For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. <sup>14</sup> And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.*

Thus, John was the Elijah-figure to come (certainly, the fulfillment of 3:1) but not the literal Elijah of Malachi 4:5-6. Yet, verse 14 suggests that if the people had repented (in light of

the king and the king's message - "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"), then (theoretically) the kingdom Jesus presented would have been accepted and then John would have been (in a sense) the Elijah of 4:5-6.

- d. After John the Baptist died, Jesus made a remarkable claim. Elijah would indeed come and "restore all things."

Matthew 17:10-13

*The disciples asked him, "Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?" <sup>11</sup> Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. <sup>12</sup> But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands." <sup>13</sup> Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist."*

Revelation 11:1-13

*I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, "Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, with its worshipers. <sup>2</sup> But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. <sup>3</sup> And I will appoint my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth." <sup>4</sup> They are "the two olive trees" and the two lampstands, and "they stand before the Lord of the earth." <sup>5</sup> If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. <sup>6</sup> They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.*

<sup>7</sup> Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.

<sup>8</sup> Their bodies will lie in the public square of the great city—which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt—where also their Lord was crucified.

<sup>9</sup> For three and a half days some from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. <sup>10</sup> The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

<sup>11</sup> But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. <sup>12</sup> Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here.” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

<sup>13</sup> At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Reflect: is one of these witnesses the real Elijah in fulfillment of Malachi 4:5-6 or another Elijah-like figure whose life and ministry is reminiscent of the prophet? ... We shall see.

#### **Concluding Thought:**

Constable, 44 quotes the *New Scofield Bible*:

Genesis reveals the entrance of the curse into the human family (Gen 3); the last word of the OT shows the curse still persisting (Mal 4:6); Matthew begins (1:1) with Him who came to remove the curse (Gal 3:13; Rev 21:3-5; 22:3).



## **“FOUR HUNDRED SILENT YEARS”**

Intertestamental Period from  
Old to New Testament

## FOUR HUNDRED (400) SILENT YEARS

With the revelation given through Malachi, the Old Testament era ends. God's inspired communication to His people ceased. Daniel had prophesied that four great kingdoms would dominate the life of the Jewish people (cf. Dan 2—the Imposing Statue and Dan 7—the Four Beasts). These represented the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. By the time of Malachi's writing (ca 433-431 BC), the Babylonians had been defeated and the Jewish exiles found themselves under Medo-Persian rule. For the next 400 years or so, there were no authentic prophets, visions, dreams, or visitations from God. This would end with the coming of the Messiah and the beginning of the New Testament story. God would visit the earth in the incarnation of His Son and birth in Bethlehem (as foretold in Mic 5:2).

These outline notes are taken from Cupp, *Panorama of the Bible*, Rev. Ed., 2015 pp. 169-172. They simply sketch the key historical events between the two testaments. They serve as a bridge to Panorama Plus 10: Life of Christ.

**A. Description:** Also called the “Inter-testamental Period”

**B. Time Frame:** the span from Malachi (OT) to Matthew (NT)

**C. Four Empires** (over the now called “Jews”)

1. **Persian Period** (539-332 BC)
  - a. Defeated the Babylonians (539 BC)
  - b. Cyrus II, a kind benefactor: agreed to “the returns”
  - c. Time of relative peace and prosperity (in exile) and poverty (in the land)
  - d. Judah governed by the High Priest

## 2. **Grecian Period** (332-167 BC)

- a. Philip of Macedon (359-336 BC)
- b. Alexander the Great (336-323 BC)
  - Conquered the Persians
  - Defeated Darius III (331 BC)
  - Took Palestine (332 BC)
  - Died leaving his empire among his four generals:

### FOUR GENERALS

1. Ptolemy Lagos (South or Egypt)
2. Seleucus Nicator (East or Syria/Babylon)
3. Cassander (West or Macedon/Greece)
4. Lysimachus (North or Thrace/Asia Minor)

- c. Palestine after Alexander the Great
  - Caught between the power struggle of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids
  - Initially under the Ptolemies but in 198 BC Antiochus III wrested control from Egypt
  - Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) was very Hellenistic; antagonistic to Jewish religion; after defeat in Egypt, returned to Jerusalem amidst much Jewish derision; offered a sow on the altar in the Holy of Holies; fueled the flames of Jewish revolt

## 3. **Maccabean Period** (Hebrew Independence)

- a. Dates: 167-63 BC
- b. Mattathias: Judean priest; led a revolt against forced Hellenization

- c. Judas Maccabees (“the hammer”): military leader; cleansed and rededicated the Temple on December 25, 165 BC (Feast of Dedication or Feast of Lights or Hanukkah)
- d. Simon Maccabees: became High Priest; statesman and gifted administrator; brought prosperity and religious reform; assassinated by brother-in-law
- e. John Hyrcanus: became High Priest at death of his father (Simon Maccabees); advanced the dynastic rule of priest-rulers known as the Hasmoneans; during his time a rivalry developed between the “Hasidim” (conservative, anti-Greeks; forerunners of the Pharisees) and the “Hellenizers” (who embraced some elements of Greek life; forerunners of the Sadducees)
- f. Civil war: 69-63 BC

#### 4. **Roman Period**

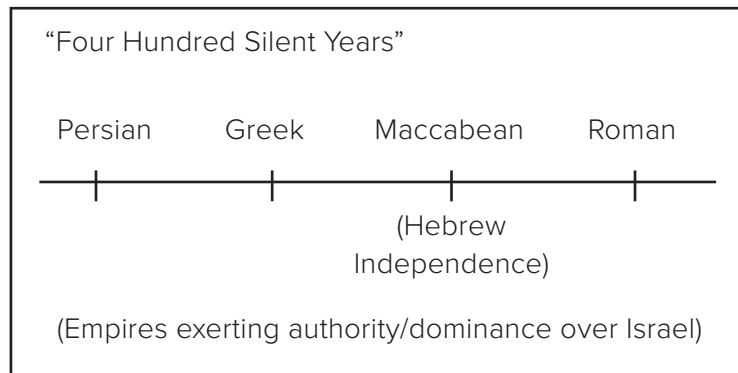
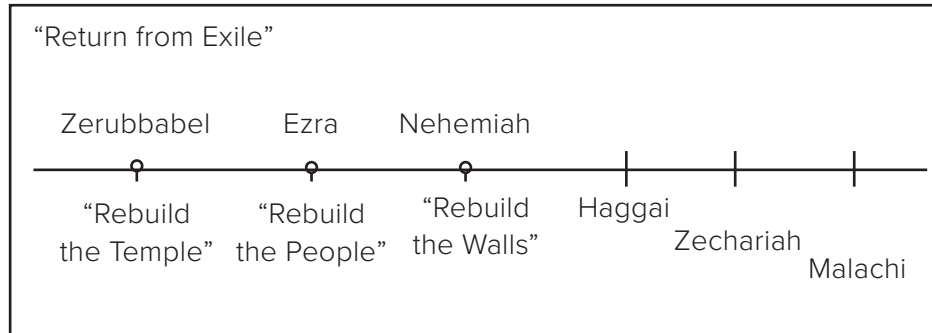
- a. Dates: 63 BC to 70 AD (as it relates to the Jews)
- b. Pompey: invaded Syria in 63 BC; enraged the Jews by entering the Holy of Holies
- c. Julius Caesar: defeated Pompey in 48 BC; not loved by the Jews, but Julius Caesar treated them leniently
- d. Death of Julius Caesar:

##### TRIUMPHATE

1. Octavius
2. Antony
3. Lepidus

- e. Octavian Augustus: defeated Marc Antony; received the “switched” loyalty of Herod the Great
- f. Herod the Great: Edomite; known as a great builder (Herod’s Temple, Masada, amphitheater at Caesarea Philippi); completely unprincipled; led his own private reign of terror (“better to be Herod’s pig than his son”); the Herod of the massacre at Bethlehem

#### D. Panorama Timelines (Movement 9)



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