

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Ezra

INTRODUCTION

Title: Hebrew: “Ezra”
LXX: “Esdras B”
Vulgate: “I Esdras”

Author: Ezra? (7:1,6 vs. 7:27-28)

Date of Events: From the Decree of Cyrus (538 BC) to the second governorship of Nehemiah (c. 430 BC).

TEXTUAL TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH EZRA-NEHEMIAH

Version	1 & 2		3	4
MT	Ezra-Nehemiah		(lacking)	(lacking)
LXX	Esdras B		Esdras A	(lacking)
Vulgate	1 Esdras	2 Esdras	3 Esdras	4 Esdras

1 & 2: The canonical text of Ezra/Nehemiah

3: A Greek work containing 2 Chronicles 35-36, Ezra, and Nehemiah 8:1-12, with some differences in order, plus an account not in the canonical text concerning Darius and Zerubbabel

4: A composite apocalyptic work originally in Greek, but now extant only in a Latin text

INTRODUCTION

Literary Observations

- first person sections in 7:27-8:34; 9:1-15
- Aramaic in 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26)

Theme: Ezra - Rebuilding the temple and people.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Ezra-Nehemiah:

Yahweh had been as loyal to the Abrahamic Covenant in the Restoration of Israel as He had previously been in Israel's history, yet post-exilic Israel had been as disobedient to the Mosaic Covenant as the previous generations of Israel; thus the full blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant had not come in Israel's immediate past but were still anticipated in the future.

OUTLINE

- I. The Return and Reconstruction under Zerubbabel, or Temple (1 - 6)*
- II. The Return and Reform under Ezra, or Teacher (7 - 10)

*Between chapters 6 & 7, there is a 57 year gap.
Esther fits in here.

KEY CHAPTERS

- 1 The decree of Cyrus allowing the return; many Israelites prepare.
- 3 The foundation of the Temple completed with much ceremony.
- 7-9 The return under Ezra, including his prayer (9).
- 10 Repentance of the people who had married into paganism.

KEY VERSES

- 4:3 Zerubbabel and Joshua reject the help of the Samaritans.
- 10:9-15 Ezra tells most of the people to put away their foreign wives, and most of them agree to do so to avoid the fierce anger of God.
- 7:10 Ezra's approach to ministry.

KEY PEOPLE

Cyrus - Persian King who allowed the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple. ca. 538 B.C.

Ezra - Priest, scribe, great reformer and expert in the Law. Under his spiritual leadership, the children of Israel put away their foreign wives.

Joshua - the High Priest, who returned with and aided Zerubbabel in rebuilding the altar and the Temple.

THE CHRONOLOGY OF EZRA/NEHEMIAH

Year	Event(s)	Reference
538 BC	The Decree of Cyrus	Ezra 1:1-4
537/6 BC	The Return under <u>Sheshbazzar</u> The Altar Built The Celebration of Tabernacles	Ezra 1:5-3:6
536/5 BC	The Laying of the Temple Foundation	Ezra 3:7-13
536/5-520 BC	The Work on the Temple Stopped	Ezra 4:1-5, 24
520 BC	The Work on the Temple Resumed	Ezra 5:1-6:13
515 BC	The Temple Completed The Celebration of Passover	Ezra 6:14-22
486 BC	An Accusation concerning the Inhabitants of Judah	Ezra 4:6
464 BC (?)	A Letter of Accusation	Ezra 4:7
464 BC (?) or ca. *446(5) BC (?)	A Letter concerning the Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem	Ezra 4:8-23

536/5-520 BC	The Work on the Temple Stopped	Ezra 4:1-5, 24
520 BC	The Work on the Temple Resumed	Ezra 5:1-6:13
515 BC	The Temple Completed The Celebration of Passover	Ezra 6:14-22
486 BC	An Accusation concerning the Inhabitants of Judah	Ezra 4:6
464 BC (?)	A Letter of Accusation	Ezra 4:7
464 BC (?) or ca. *446(5) BC (?)	A Letter concerning the Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem	Ezra 4:8-23
458(7) BC	The Decree of Artaxerxes The Return of Ezra The Problem of Mixed Marriages	Ezra 7:1-10:16
457(6) BC	The Report concerning Those with Foreign Wives	Ezra 10:17-44
446(5) BC	The Report to Nehemiah concerning Jerusalem	Nehemiah 1:1-11
445(4) BC	The Decree of Artaxerxes The Return of Nehemiah	Nehemiah 2:1-13:3

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Gregory Goswell, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (EP Study Commentary).

SELECTED INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

1. Sheshbazzar (E, 1:8, 11; 5:14-16)/
Zerubbabel (E, 2:2; 3:2, 8; 4:2, 3; 5:2; N,
7:7; 12:1)
 - A. Two Names of the Same Man
 - B. Two Different Men

TWO DIFFERENT MEN

- 1) Sheshbazzar died shortly after arriving in Judea and was replaced by Zerubbabel
- 2) Sheshbazzar was the Shenazzar in 1 Chronicles 3:17 and thus Zerubbabel's uncle
- 3) Sheshbazzar was a Persian official recognized as governor by the Persians in 538/7 B.C.; Zerubbabel returned in 537 BC and was recognized as 'leader' by the Israelites and later became the officially recognized governor by the Persians in 520-15 BC.

SELECTED INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

1. Sheshbazzar (E, 1:8, 11; 5:14-16)/
Zerubbabel (E, 2:2; 3:2, 8; 4:2, 3; 5:2; N,
7:7; 12:1)

A. Two Names of the Same Man

B. Two Different Men

SELECTED INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

1. The Historical Setting of Ezra 3:1-4:5

A. The Reign of Cyrus (538/7, *537/6, or 536/5 BC)

B. The Reign of Darius (520/19 BC)

C. The Reigns of Cyrus (3:1-6) and Darius (3:7-4:5)

CORRELATION OF EZRA/NEHEMIAH

Daniel	Ezra / Nehemiah				Chronicles
<i>Babylon</i>	<i>Persia</i>				<i>Israel</i>
<i>Persia</i>	<i>Cyrus</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	<i>Babylon</i>
<i>Greece</i>	<i>Darius</i>				<i>Persia</i>
<i>Rome</i>	<i>Ahasuerus</i>				<i>(under</i>
<i>God's Kingdom</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>				<i>Cyrus)</i>
	E/1 - E/6	E/7 - E/10	N/1 - N/13:3	N/13:4	
	538-515 <u>BC</u>	458-457 <u>BC</u>	446-433 <u>BC</u>	<u>430?-425 BC</u>	
Written ca. 535 <u>BC</u>	Written ca. 420-400 <u>BC</u>				Written ca. 400 <u>BC</u>

SELECTED INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

1. The Historical Setting of Ezra 3:1-4:5

A. **The Reign of Cyrus** (538/7, *537/6, or
536/5 BC)

B. The Reign of Darius (520/19 BC)

C. The Reigns of Cyrus (3:1-6) and Darius
(3:7-4:5)

SELECTED INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

1. The Historical Setting of Ezra 4:6-23

A. Chronologically Accurate

B. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes = Cambyses, son of Cyrus

C. Ahasuerus = Cambyses; Artaxerxes = Pseudo-Smerdis

D. Historically Confused

E. A Parenthesis (cf. 6:14) Recording Continued
Opposition

CORRELATION OF EZRA/NEHEMIAH

Daniel	Ezra / Nehemiah				Chronicles
<i>Babylon</i>	<i>Persia</i>				<i>Israel</i>
<i>Persia</i>	<i>Cyrus</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>	<i>Babylon</i>
<i>Greece</i>	<i>Darius</i>				<i>Persia</i>
<i>Rome</i>	<i>Ahasuerus</i>				<i>(under</i>
<i>God's Kingdom</i>	<i>Artaxerxes</i>				<i>Cyrus)</i>
	E/1 - E/6	E/7 - E/10	N/1 - N/13:3	N/13:4	
	538-515 <u>BC</u>	458-457 <u>BC</u>	446-433 <u>BC</u>	<u>430?</u> -425 <u>BC</u>	
Written ca. 535 <u>BC</u>	Written ca. 420-400 <u>BC</u>				Written ca. 400 <u>BC</u>

SELECTED INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS

1. The Historical Setting of Ezra 4:6-23

A. Chronologically Accurate

B. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes = Cambyses, son of Cyrus

C. Ahasuerus = Cambyses; Artaxerxes = Pseudo-Smerdis

D. Historically Confused

E. A Parenthesis (cf. 6:14) Recording Continued
Opposition