

VISION FOR THE WORD OF GOD

EZRA and NEHEMIAH

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Introduction

Many scholars believe that originally Ezra and Nehemiah were part of a larger work that included I and II Chronicles (connection between II Chronicles 36: 22-23 and Ezra 1: 1-3). In the Hebrew Bible the books are not separated until the fifteenth century. However they were separated during the period of the early church fathers in the Christian Bible.

Historical Timeframe

Call of Abraham as father of the people of God

Birth of Isaac

Births and separation of Esau and Jacob

Twelve sons of Jacob and selling of Joseph into Egyptian slaver

Rise of Joseph to power in Egypt

Joseph's family settles in Egypt

Death of Joseph and the oppression of Hebrews in Egypt

Deliverance by Moses and 40 year sojourn in the wilderness

Joshua, Moses successor takes a new generation into Promised Land and conquers it

Israelites exist as a confederation of tribes held together by leaders called judges

Samuel rises as last great judge that leads to birth of monarchy

Saul becomes Israel's first king

David succeeds Saul and Solomon succeeds his father David

Israel splits under Rehoboam because of Solomon's apostasy into kingdoms of 10 tribes in the northern Palestine known as Israel, and two tribes in the south known as Judah

722 BC, Assyria (Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq) under Sargon destroys Samaria and exiles people (10 tribes). Resettles the land with foreigners who worship Israel's God along with other pagan deities.

605, Babylonians (Chaldeans/Iraq) under Nebuchadnezzar defeat Assyrians/Egyptians

598-7, Babylon seizes Jerusalem and takes leading citizens such as Daniel, into exile

598, Zedekiah rebels against Babylon with Egyptian aid, during ministry of Jeremiah

587/6, Jerusalem conquered; temple destroyed; people exiled with only a remnant left in Jerusalem

562, Nebuchadnezzar dies

539, Cyrus (Medes/Persians) defeats Babylonians and allows Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem

530, Cyrus dies

520-515, Exiles return and begin rebuilding the temple

458-430, Ezra and Nehemiah

Outline of Ezra/Nehemiah

Ezra 1:1-6:22, Return from exile and rebuilding of the temple

Ezra 7: 1-10: 44, Initial work of Ezra

Nehemiah 1: 1-7: 73a, Return of Nehemiah and rebuilding of walls of Jerusalem

Nehemiah 7: 73b-10: 39, Torah, confession and firm agreement

Nehemiah 11: 1-13: 31, Climax of Nehemiah's work and related matters

Lessons from Ezra/Nehemiah

Real beginning of the conflict between Judeans and Samaritans that was present even in the times of the Lord Jesus began during time of Ezra (Ezra 4). The Samaritans accept the Torah but nothing else and established worship on Mount Gerazim. Many troubles and issues have long roots that cannot be solved by quick fixes. To solve a problem we must know its roots.

Prohibition against foreign marriages was not as much about race as it was about fear of corrupting faith. This prohibition, along with Tower of Babel, has been used by segregationists and racists to justify segregation.

Without strong and consistent leadership, people will stray. Therefore every great nation, church, institution and corporation needs strong leadership to continue to growth.