



Ezra and Nehemiah

Beginning in 2 Chronicles



Ezra Nehemiah

- Title:
 1. Hebrew—"Ezra and Nehemiah"
 2. LXX: "Esdras B"
 3. Vulgate: "I & II Esdrae"
- Date of Events: from the decree of Cyrus (538 bc) to the second governorship of Nehemiah (430 bc.).
- Author: Most likely Ezra.
- May have originally been 1 book.
- 4:8-6:18 and 7:12-26 written in Aramaic.



Ezra Continued

- Was a scribe.
- Tradition says he was the founder of the Great Synagogue, where the complete OT canon was first formally recognized.



Background of Ezra

- The Northern kingdom of Israel (10 tribes) is attacked and defeated by the Assyrians in 722 bc. and scattered all across empire.
- They never return.
- The Southern kingdom is taken in 3 deportation waves (605 bc, 587 bc. 586 bc.) by the Babylonians.
- Picking it up in 2 Chronicles.



2 Chronicles?

- II Chronicles covers exclusively the Judean kings.
- In preparation for our reading of Ezra we begin today in II Chronicles 36:11-21*
- Jer. 29:10ff
- II Chr. 36:22-23



Persian Empire





Return to Jerusalem in 3 Waves

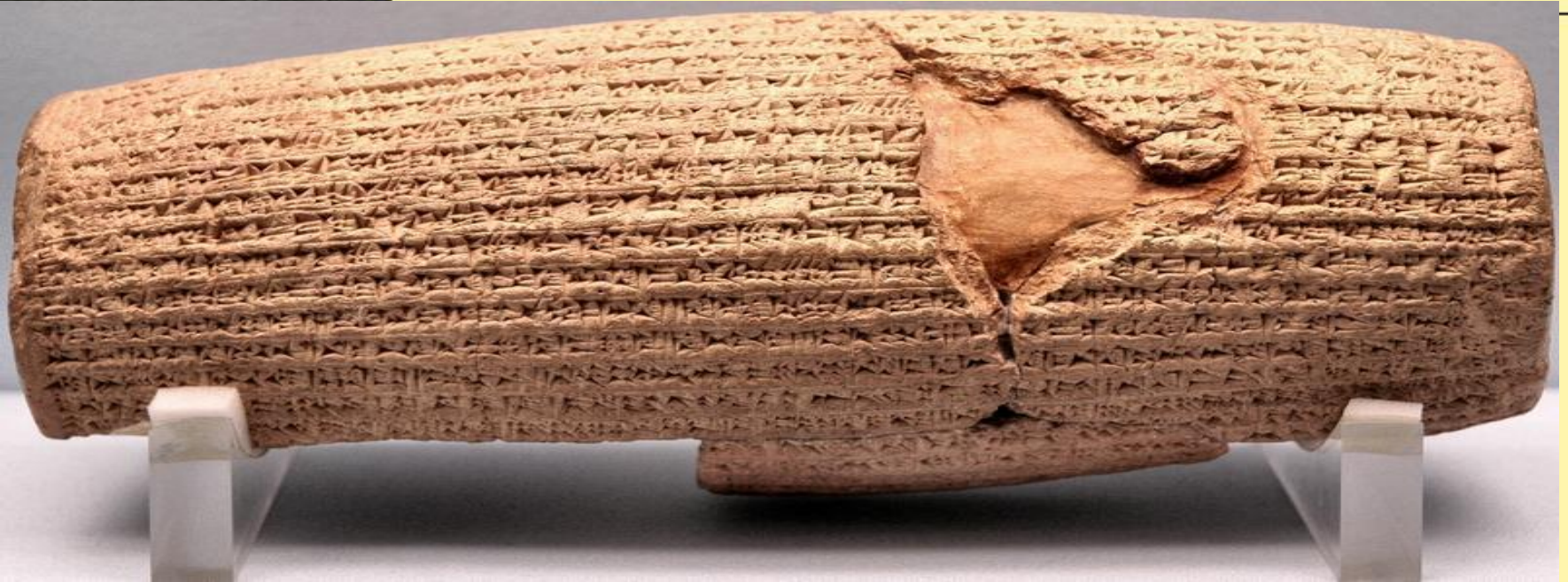
1. 1st under Zerubbabel Ch. 1-6 (538bc).
2. 2nd under Ezra Ch. 7-10 (458 bc.)
3. 3rd under Nehemiah (445 bc.)



To The Text!

- Read 1:1-4
- While Jeremiah had prophesized the return (we read already).
- 150 years before this Isaiah spoke of Cyrus—Is. 44:28-45:1-7*
- Josephus claims that Daniel read Isaiah's prophecy to Cyrus and Cyrus marveled at its accuracy and quickly set about declaring this proclamation.

Cyrus the Great's Cylinder



- Discovered by archeologists in Babylon in 1879 is a cuneiform tablet written in Accadian.
- It says, in part: “I returned the divine statues from many sacred cities to their sanctuaries, which had been in ruins for a long period of time. I reestablished permanent sanctuaries for them. At the command of Marduk (Jer. 50:2), Great God of Babylon, I restored the gods taken by Nabonidus. He had angered Marduk by taking captive the gods of Sumer and Akkad and placing them in Babylon. But I resettled them peacefully in their former chapels where they are happy. May all the gods whom I have resettled in their former sanctuaries intercede daily on my behalf to Marduk and his son Nabu. May they ask for me to have a long life and may they say to Marduk, my lord, “May Cyrus the king who worships you and Cambyses his son..””



God Preserves

- Ezra 1:5-11
- Chapter 2, any thoughts?
- Urim and Thummim? (Ex. 28:30; Num. 27:21; Deut. 33:8; 1 Sam. 28:6)
- Objects kept in the breastplate of the High-Priest which were used to determine God's will. How that was done and in what way is not explained.



Events Unfold

- Chapter 1: hearts are stirred, vessels retrieved, resources gathered.
- Chapter 2: People are numbered and things are organized, money is given for the work.
- Chapter 3: Gathered at Jerusalem, altar built (1st thing built), burnt offerings!
Gathered tradesmen and resources for the work.



Temple Foundation

- 3:8-12 a time of rejoicing and ? (cf. Hag. 2:1-4*)
- Ch. 4 (vv 1-5)
- How might we apply these verses to us today as Christians?
 1. Beware, be on guard
 2. watch for true worshippers
 3. Be discerning.
 4. there are always people ready to ruin and discourage you in the work of the Lord.



Clarifying the Text.

- Ezra 4:6-23 is a parenthesis. Ezra continues the theme of enemies hindering the work by showing that in subsequent years under other Persian kings there would be adversaries.
- The account picks up again under 4:24
- Kings of Persia:
 1. Cyrus
 2. Darius I
 3. Ahasuerus (Xerxes) Time of Esther.
 4. Artaxerxes



Stuanch Opposition Continues

- Ch. 5
- Ch. 6 Darius Finds Cyrus's Decree and celebration of the Passover!
- It is during the period between chapters 6 and 7 that Esther takes place.
- Chapter 6 marks the end of Zerubbabel, 7 the beginning of Ezra.



Ezra!

- 7:6, 7:10
- Artaxerxes decree, everything provided for from silver and gold, utensils, animals for sacrifice, even tax exempt! (7:11-24).
- Even allowed to appoint judges and teach people the laws of God and to enforce those who do not obey it! (v.25-26)
- What does this show us about God?



Continued

- Mixed Marriages (ch. 9)
- Nehemiah next week.



Last Week

- Who was taken first into captivity and dispersed?
- By whom?
- What nation took Judah?
- At the start of Ezra, who is now the dominating world power (what nation)?
- How many returns to Jerusalem are made by the Jews?
- Who leads each trip and in what order?
- Finally, what is the response of the people upon the laying of the foundation?



Nehemiah



Nehemiah

General Observations.

- The events cover approximately 13 years.
- Nehemiah and Malachi are the last OT books historically.
- There is a 400 year gap of silence scripturally between Nehemiah/Malachi and the birth of John the Baptist (the last OT prophet) and Christ.
- It is said that Psalm 126 was written at this time of return.
- Nearly 100 years since the return, the walls of Jerusalem are still broken down.



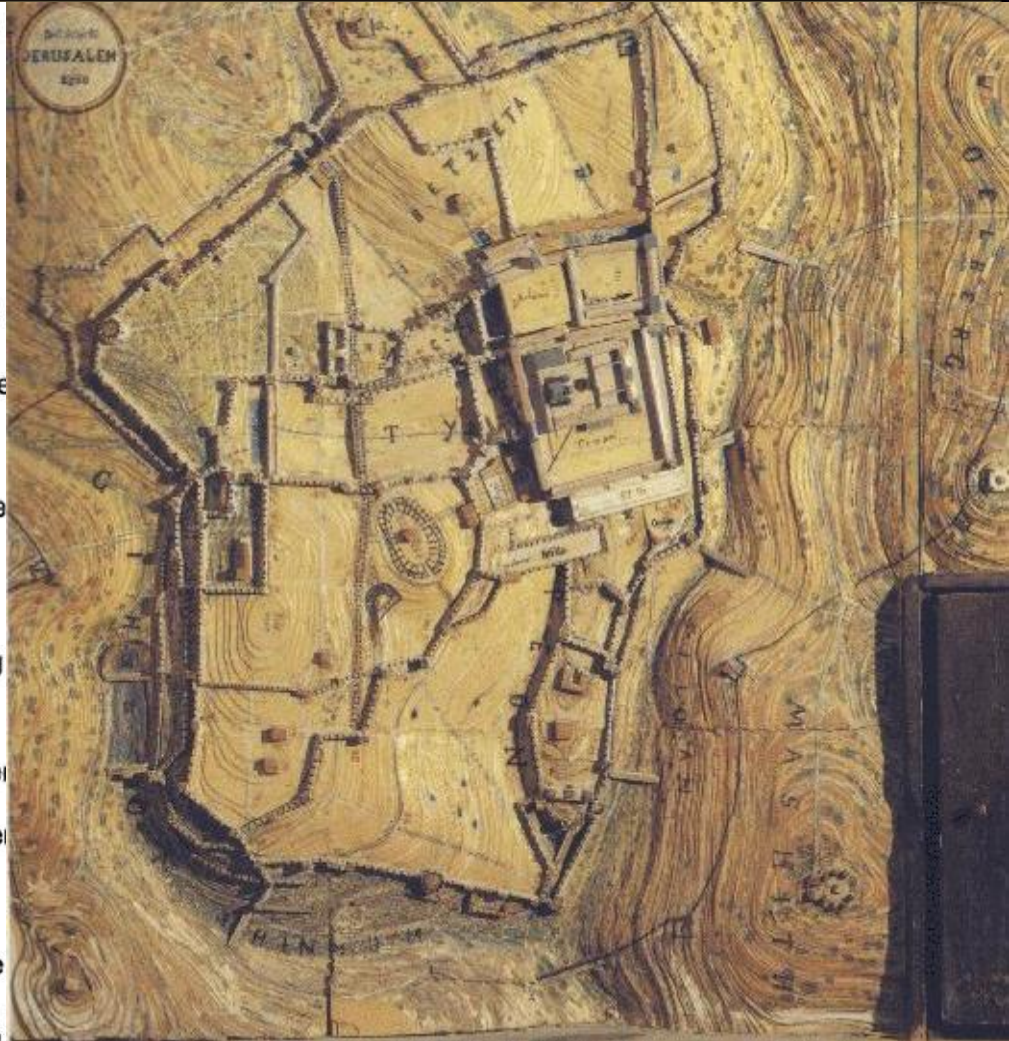
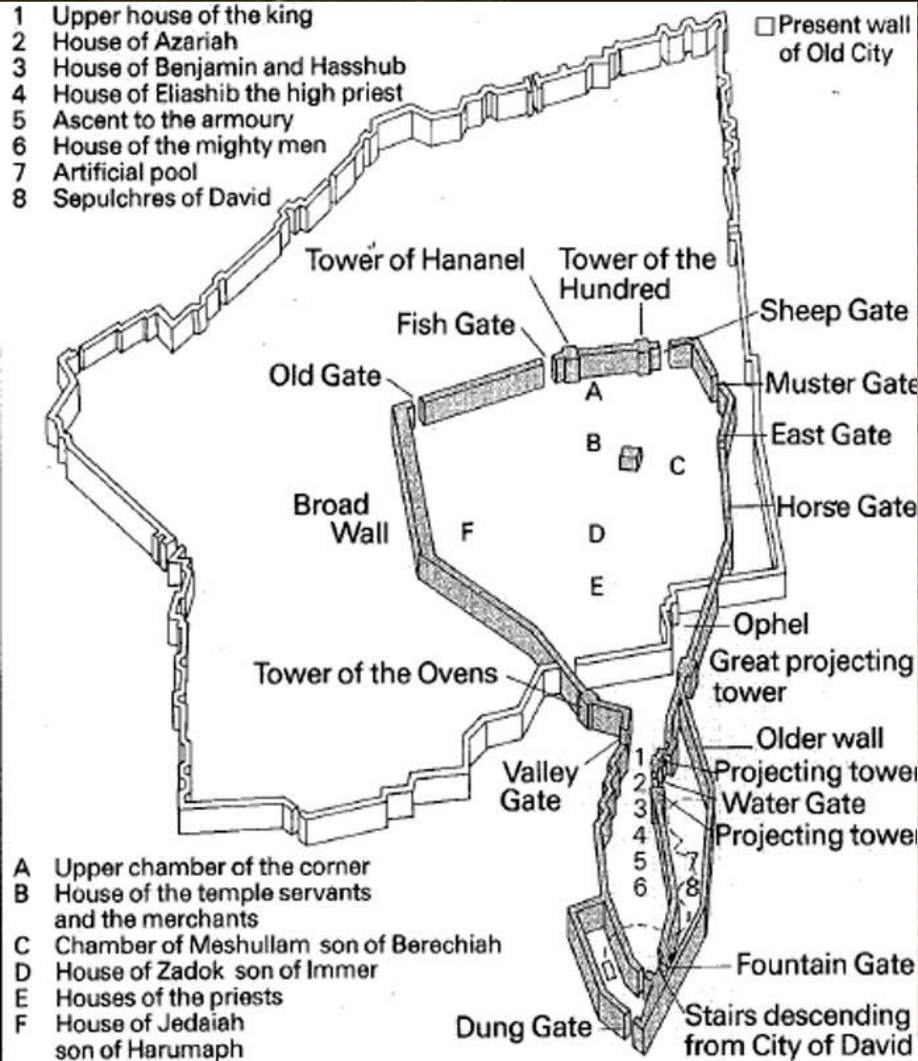
To the Text!

- The state of Jerusalem (1:1-3)
- Nehemiah's Response (1:4)
- Nehemiah's Prayer (1:5-11)
- A dangerous mood (2:1-2)
- The Lord answers prayer (2:3-7)
- Sleepless in Jerusalem (2:11-18)



The Night Stroll of Nehemiah

(Neh. 2:12-15)



Text Continued

- Ch. 3 DETAIL!
- Ch. 4 Opposition.
- What do we learn from chapter 4?
- Ch. 5 Doing Right.
- Ch. 6 Lies, trickery, done.
- Ch. 7 Census Found.
- Ch. 8 **BRING THE BOOK!**
- Ch. 9 Repentence*





Text Continued

- Ch. 10 Signed recommitment to the Law and God.
- Ch. 11 Head Count of leaders/families.
- Ch. 12 The Magnificent Choir!
- Ch. 13 Nehemiah cleans house.



Redemptive History

- After the trauma of the exile, the Lord reminds the people that He is faithful to complete that which He has started. He is faithful to His promises.
- Though He has shown His faithfulness to the nation of Israel the one great problem still exists---what is it?
- Sin, and the sinfulness of men and women. (age old dilemma).



What is Needed?

- The Lord Himself must come and set all things right.
- He who is boundless, all powerful, unsearchable, He will come in the likeness of human flesh with its frailties.
- From the bosom of the Father comes the Son, He who is **with** God and **is** God (John 1:1), for He proceeded forth and comes from the Father (Jn. 8:42).
- He leaves the glory which He had with the Father before the world was to come to earth (Jn17:24).
- And his one soul purpose is?
- To seek and to save the lost! (Lk. 19:10)
- He sais to us, “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mat. 28:20)



Next Week

- Job 1-2
- Following week Job 3-42