

## Bible Overview

# Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra

Nehemiah

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## Ezra

**Author:** Ezra

**Time:** 538 – 457 B.C.

**Summary:** Ezra covers the events of the Jews returning from the Babylonian captivity. The decline of Babylon and its eventual overthrow by the Persians brought about this return to Jerusalem. The Jews are numbered and are allowed to return to Judah to rebuild the Temple. Samaritan assistance is rejected and their opposition is a contributing factor to the slow progress of the Temple construction. Despite the delays, the Temple is completed and dedicated during this period.

### Key verse:

"The Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage" (9:8).

**Main people:** Ezra

### 1. The exiles return from Babylon 1:1 – 2:70

- a) The decree of Cyrus 1:1–4
- b) Preparations for the journey 1:5–11
- c) Those who returned 2:1–70

### 2. Temple building begins 3:1 – 4:23

- a) The altar and the foundation 3:1–13
- b) Opposition to the work 4:1–23

### **3. The building completed 4:24 – 6:22**

- a) Work resumed 4:24 – 5:5
- b) Tatnai's letter to Darius 5:6–17
- c) Decrees of Cyrus and Darius 6:1–12
- d) The Temple finished 6:13–22

### **4. Ezra's journey to Jerusalem 7:1 – 8:36**

- a) Ezra introduced 7:1–10
- b) Letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra 7:11–28
- c) The journey to Jerusalem 8:1–36

### **5. Ezra's reforms 9:1 – 10:44**

- a) The offence of mixed marriages and Ezra's prayer 9:1–15
- b) The abandonment of mixed marriages 10:1–17
- c) List of those with foreign wives 10:18–44

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## **Nehemiah**

**Author:** Nehemiah

**Time:** 445 – 432 B.C.

**Summary:** The book begins with Nehemiah returning from Babylon as Governor of Jerusalem. He plans and oversees the rebuilding of the city wall despite discouraging opposition and disunity within the Jewish population. The wall is completed and more exiles are returned and registered as Jewish citizens. Nehemiah's dedication to God drives him to make several religious reforms including a public reading of the Law and arrangements for worship.

**Key verse:**

"So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart" (4:6)

**Main person:** Nehemiah

**1. Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem 1:1 – 2:20**

- a) Tragic news from Jerusalem, and Nehemiah's prayer 1:1–11
- b) The granting of Nehemiah's request 2:1–8
- c) Nehemiah's survey of the walls, and his report 2:9–20

**2. The building of the wall 3:1 – 7:4**

- a) The workmen and their tasks 3:1–32
- b) The opposition of enemies 4:1–23
- c) Reforms of Nehemiah as governor 5:1–19
- d) The wall finished despite opposition 6:1–7:3

**3. List of exiles 7:4–73a**

**4. Ezra's preaching and reforms 7:73b – 10:39**

- a) The reading and observance of God's Law 7:73b – 8:18
- b) A public confession and covenant 9:1–10:39

**5. Lists of inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem 11:1–12:26**

- a) New residents of Jerusalem 11:1–24
- b) New residents of Judah 11:25–36
- c) List of priests and Levites 12:1–26

**6. Dedication of walls and organisation of temple services 12:27–47**

**7. Nehemiah's second administration 13:1–31**

- a) Abuses during his absence 13:1–5
- b) Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem 13:6–9
- c) Reorganisation and reforms 13:10–31