

Trinity Bible Church
 May 11, 2011
 Lesson 2

Dispensational Transitions From the Dispersion into Babylon To the Close of the New Testament

I. From the Dispersion into Babylon to the close of the Old Testament

1. The Period of Captivity in Babylon. 586-516 B.C.
2. The Prophets' Encouragement.
 - A. Haggai. (Encouragement)
 - B. Zechariah. (The Jealousy of YAHWEH)
3. After the return from Babylon to their land three Old Testament Books were written concerning various events in Israel's history.
 - A. Esther. (Protection of God's People)
 - B. Ezra. (Reconstruction of the Temple and Restoration of the People)
 - C. Nehemiah. (Reconstruction of the City)
4. *The Temple was rebuilt*
5. *Book of Malachi* Esther
Closed the OT.

The book gives no hint of who wrote it, but whoever it was knew the Persian culture well. The account has all the indications of a person who was there, for he described the events as an eyewitness. Therefore, he was probably a Jew. Some have suggested that Ezra or Nehemiah wrote the account but no specific evidence supports that view.

The book takes its name from the chief character, whose Hebrew name Hadassah (Myrtle) was changed to the Persian name Ester, which most likely means "star."

The events of Esther occurred between the sixth and seventh chapters of Ezra, between the first return led by Zerubbabel and the second return led by Ezra. Esther was written sometime between 470 and 465 B.C., during the latter years of Xerxes' reign (10:2-3), or in the reign of his son Artaxerxes (464-424 B.C.).

Esther tells the story of a beautiful Jewish girl whom King Xerxes of Persia chose to be his queen. When Haman planned to murder all the Jews, Queen Esther's cousin Mordecai persuaded Esther to try to save her people. Risking her own life, she appealed to the king and rescued the Jews. Although this is the only book in the Bible which does not include the name of God, the theme and purpose of the book is to show God's providential care of His people in their trials and persecutions. The key people are: Esther, Haman, Mordecai, and Xerxes.

Esther provides a fitting picture of Christ in that she was willing to put herself in the place of death for her people's salvation and also in that she acted as an advocate for them.

Outline

1. The Danger to the Jews (1:1-3:15)
2. The Deliverance of the Jews (4:1-10:3)

Ezra (Reconstruction of the Temple and Restoration of the People)

Although the book of Ezra does not name its author, Jewish tradition as recorded in the Talmud recognizes Ezra as its author. Ezra wrote these books using various documents (4:7-16), genealogies (2:1-70) and personal notes (7:27-9:15). The fact that Ezra is the principal character of the major sections of the book lends further support to his authorship.

Tradition holds that Ezra was the founder of the "Great Synagogue" where the books of Old Testament scripture were assembled. Another tradition says that he collected the Biblical books into a unit and that he originated the synagogue form of worship. It was written between 457-444 B.C.

In the ancient Hebrew Bible, Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book and called "The Book of Ezra." Modern Hebrew Bibles designate the two-fold arrangement of Ezra and Nehemiah as in the English versions.

Levitical sacrifices were soon reinstated on a rebuilt altar for burnt offerings (Ezra 3:1-6), and in the second year of the return the foundation of the Temple was laid (Ezra 3:8-13; 5:16). However, Samaritan harassment and eventual Persian pressure brought a halt to the rebuilding of the Temple. Then spiritual apathy set in; and for about 16 more years - until the rule of the Persian king, Darius Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.) the construction of the Temple was discontinued. In the second year of Darius (520 B.C.) God raised up Haggai the prophet to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:1), but it had not yet come (Hag 1:2), so it was a prophecy to encourage them to get ready.

From an historical standpoint, Ezra continues the narrative where 2 Chronicles ends and traces the history of the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple. From a spiritual and doctrinal standpoint, Ezra demonstrates how God fulfilled His promise to return His people to the land of promise after seventy years of exile as announced by the prophets. As in Chronicles, Ezra, as a priest, shows the importance of the Temple and its worship to the life of the nation as God's people. It begins with the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, which allowed a remnant of the people to return. The people enthusiastically began rebuilding the Temple, but were delayed for 18 years by enemies from the North. Finally a decree from Darius let them finish (Ezra 1-6). Chapters 7-10 tell about the return of the priest Ezra, who taught the people the law and reformed the nation's spiritual life.

The theme can be summarized as the spiritual, moral, and social restoration of the remnant of Jews who returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. The key people are: Cyrus, Ezra, Jeshua and Zerubbabel.

In keeping with the Davidic Covenant and God's promises to keep the line of descendants alive for Messiah, Son of David, Ezra and Nehemiah show how God continued to keep His promises by restoring His people to their land.

Outline

1. The Restoration: The First Return to Jerusalem Under Zerubbabel (1:1-6:22)
2. The Reformation of the People; the Return Under Ezra (7:1-10:44)

Nehemiah (Reconstruction of the City)

Although some believe Nehemiah wrote this book because of the words, "*The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah*" (1:1), there are those who believe the evidence suggests Ezra is the author of Nehemiah and used Nehemiah's notes and accounts as though quoting him. Many scholars also support the belief that Nehemiah authored the book bearing his name because much of the book is presented as a personal account of the circumstances surrounding his return to Jerusalem (1:1–7:73; 12:31–13:31).

Although originally one book with Ezra, the last half of the book draws its name from Nehemiah, who was a contemporary of Ezra and cupbearer to the king of Persia. Nehemiah's name means "YAHWEH consoles or comforts." The historical setting is simply that of the last half of the ancient Hebrew book of Ezra-Nehemiah which means it was written about 445 B.C. to 425 B.C.

The book of Nehemiah continues the history of the Jews who returned from exile. Nehemiah gave up his position as cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the Persian king, to become governor of Jerusalem and led the people in repairing the city walls. Ezra and Nehemiah lived at the same time (Neh 8:2, 9). They were both men of God but served YAHWEH in different capacities. While Ezra was a priest and more involved with the religious restoration of the returning remnant, Nehemiah was a layman and served in a political capacity as Governor in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah was also written to show the obvious hand of God in the return of His people to their homeland in the years after their exile. Under the leadership of Nehemiah, they accomplished in fifty-two days what had not been done in the ninety-four years since the first return under Zerubbabel. By obedient faith they were able to overcome what appeared to be insurmountable (overwhelming) opposition. The key people are: Nehemiah, Artaxerxes, Sanballet, and Ezra.

Nehemiah portrays Christ's willingness to leave His high position in order to bring about His work of restoration. Further, the decree of Artaxerxes marks the beginning point of Daniel's prophecy of seventy weeks of years which, though interrupted by an unspecified time, begins the countdown for the return of Messiah (Dan 9:25-27).

Outline

1. The Rebuilding of the Walls (1:1–7:73)
2. The Restoration of the People (8:1–13:31)

4. The Temple Was Rebuilt.

The decree to rebuild the Temple marks a significant beginning in chronology that is tied directly to the First Advent of Jesus Christ, the Messiah (Dan 9:24-27). This decree occurred March 5, 444 B.C. After 173,880 days which is the 69 weeks of years referred to in Daniel 9:24-27, the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem occurred.

The temple was rebuilt under the supervision of the Medo-Persian empire. This empire includes kings with the names of Xerxes, Artaxerxes, Darius, Cyrus, and Ahasuerus.