

Bible Training Institute

To proactively accelerate the spiritual growth of Grace Bible Church for the purpose of knowing God more intimately and becoming more effective servants of God in the world

A scroll of parchment with a dark red background. The scroll is unrolled, showing the text 'Ezra-Nehemiah & Esther' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The parchment has a slightly textured appearance with some minor discoloration and a scalloped edge on the right side.

Ezra-Nehemiah & Esther

Introduction to Ezra-Nehemiah

- Title—Hebrew: Ezra-Nehemiah
- Author: Unknown but Ezra the heavy favorite
- Dates of Events: Decree of Cyrus (538 BC) to second governorship of Nehemiah (c. 430 BC)

Historical and Theological Themes

- God
 - “The God of Heaven”—12x
 - The Sovereign God
- Prayer
 - Men of prayer
 - Actual prayers
- Covenant Renewal to Post-Exile Israel—
Temple, Law, Levites, Sin, Confession

Purpose of Ezra-Nehemiah

YHWH 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.

Literary Structure

- I. The Return Under Sheshbazzar/Zerubbabel -
Ezra 1-6--Ca. 538-515 BC
- II. The Return Under Ezra—Ezra 7-10--Ca. 458-457
BC
- III. The Return Under Nehemiah—Neh 1-13:3--Ca.
445-433 BC
- IV. The Failure of the People Neh 13:4ff--Ca. 430-
425 BC
 - I. “remember me”—a plea for mercy despite the sin of
the people (vv14, 22, 31)

Key Chapter—Nehemiah 9

- Key to understanding the OT
- Compare to Psalms 105-106
- Most Torah-saturated generation since Moses
- 23 straight days in the Bible as a people
- Chapter 10, the people repent
- Chapter 13, they don't follow through

Introduction to Esther

- Title: Hebrew and LXX = “Esther”
- Author: Unknown (Mordecai, Ezra, Nehemiah are candidates)
- Dates of Events: c. 483 BC (1:3) to c. 473 BC— happens in the MIDST of Ezra/Nehemiah

Historical and Theological Themes

- No mention of God's Name
- No mention of Palestine, Jerusalem, Temple, Law, Prayer
- Reversal of Human Plans (4,6,7,8,9)—THE theme of the book
- The Jews—44x
- Major Characters
 - Ahasuerus
 - Haman
 - Mordecai
 - Esther

Purpose of Esther

While the physical seed of Abraham was not faithful to YHWH, they were still sovereignly protected by God from Gentile attack.

Literary Structure

I. From Vashti to Esther—1:1-2:18

- i. Royal Edict--1:13-22
- ii. Feast #1-- 1:3,5,9
- iii. Feast #2-- 2:18

II. From Haman to Mordecai—2:19-7:10

- i. Royal Edict-- 3:7-15
- ii. Feast #1--5:4,5,6,8,12,14
- iii. Feast #2--6:14; 7:2,7,8

III. From Calamity to Good for the Jews—8:1-10:3

- i. Royal Edict-- 8:3-14
- ii. Feast #1--8:17
- iii. Feast #2--9:17-19,22
- iv. Feast of Purim

Interpretive Issues

Literary Genre of Esther

- Complete fiction?
- Historical fiction?
- Historical narrative.
 - Hebrew grammatical mechanism for historical narrative
 - Chronological references
 - Invitation to search historical records

Interpretive Issues

Nature of Mordecai—spiritual or unspiritual Jew?

- Incomplete bio
- Less than Torah-keeping
- Willing to let Esther live as a Persian
- Vastly different than Daniel and his friends
- Definitely a Jewish patriot—but not Torah-directed

Interpretive Issues

Nature of Esther—spiritual or unspiritual Jew?

- Esther went into the king's chamber for less than pure purposes
- She fasted but not according to Torah
- Not a model young woman—she blended completely into her culture and society
- **CONTRAST: RUTH**