Synopsis of Ezra & Nehemiah

“The theme of this composite book is a record of the reconstruction of the Hebrew theocracy upon the physical and spiritual foundations of the past. As God protected His remnant from the hatred of external foes, so also He delivered them from the insidious corruption of the false brethren within the commonwealth.” – A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Pg. 456

“Together, the two books cover about one century of history—from 539 to 433 B.C. The book of Ezra describes a first wave of exiles who return to Judah under King Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple in the years 539–516 B.C.,5 as well as a second wave who return with Ezra more than fifty years later (around 458). Nehemiah, whom we will look at in our next study, rebuilds the walls a little more than ten years later (445–433 B.C.).” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 7771

“Ezra-Nehemiah acknowledges the important role of Persian kings (Ezra 1:1-4; 6:1-12), but wants us to know that it was Yahweh who stirred up the spirit of Cyrus and put a desire to beautify the temple into the heart of Artaxerxes (1:1; 7:27).” – Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 1626

Ezra & Nehemiah

Outline based on Old Testament Theology

- Ezra 1-6 – summarization of the history of Israel from the decree of Cyrus to Ezra's time (539 B.C. to 458 B.C.)
- Ezra 7-10 – emphasizes God's demand for purity among His people
- Nehemiah 1-7 – proclaims that it is the Lord who rebuilds Jerusalem
- Nehemiah 8-13 – presents the God who inspires covenant renewal

I. God Returns A Remnant To The Promised Land (Ezra 1-6)

It is nearly 50 years since the Babylonians deported the tribe of Judah, and were used by God to exact discipline on His children for their disobedience. Cyrus, by the direction of God and fulfillment of prophecy, releases God’s children to go back and resettle the land. The altar is erected and the foundation is laid for the reconstruction of the temple. However, opposition arises causing God’s people to cave into fear. God sends His prophets, uses another foreign King, and brings the wealth of the nations to see that His temple is completed.

a. Key Verses

i. Ezra 1:1–4 (ESV) — 1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all
his kingdom and also put it in writing: 2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem.”

“Rulers are not autonomous. They answer to God who allowed them to rise to prominence.” – *Old Testament Theology, Pg. 515*

God spoke through Isaiah in Isaiah 44:28 that Cyrus would be God’s servant to rebuild God’s temple. This prophecy came 150 years before the birth of Cyrus and 180 years before the fulfillment of the prophecy.

ii. **Ezra 3:1–3 (ESV)** — 1 When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. 2 Then arose Jeshua the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. 3 They set the altar in its place, for fear was on them because of the peoples of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord, burnt offerings morning and evening.

iii. **Ezra 3:8–10 (ESV)** — 8 Now in the second year after their coming to the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak made a beginning, together with the rest of their kinsmen, the priests and the Levites and all who had come to Jerusalem from the captivity. They appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to supervise the work of the house of the Lord. 9 And Jeshua with his sons and his brothers, and Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together supervised the workmen in the house of God, along with the sons of Henadad and the Levites, their sons and brothers. 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel.

iv. **Ezra 4:4 (ESV)** — 4 Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build
The letters recorded in 4:7-23 do not refer to the rebuilding of the temple, but to the reconstruction of the wall prior to Nehemiah’s arrival. So what purpose does this serve at this location in Ezra? John Sailhamer says, “Although not written during the time of Zerubbabel’s building of the temple, the letter provides a glimpse into the ongoing rivalry between the Jews and the inhabitants of Samaria throughout this period.” (*NIV Compact Bible Commentary, Pg. 303*)

v. **Ezra 5:1–2 (ESV)** — 1 Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. 2 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

vi. **Ezra 6:6–10 (ESV)** — 6 “Now therefore, Tattenai, governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and your associates the governors who are in the province Beyond the River, keep away. 7 Let the work on this house of God alone. Let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews rebuild this house of God on its site. 8 Moreover, I make a decree regarding what you shall do for these elders of the Jews for the rebuilding of this house of God. The cost is to be paid to these men in full and without delay from the royal revenue, the tribute of the province from Beyond the River. 9 And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail, 10 that they may offer pleasing sacrifices to the God of heaven and pray for the life of the king and his sons.

vii. **Ezra 6:14–15 (ESV)** — 14 And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; 15 and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

**II. Ezra Is Sent To Preach Repentance And Righteousness (Ezra 7-10)**

The temple is complete and ~80 years after the Jews returned to the land Ezra, a descendant of Aaron, is sent by the Persian king to the Promised Land. Ezra is well-versed in the Law and is broken over the unfaithfulness of God’s people caused by their
intermarriage with non-Israelites. Ezra is used to lead the Jews to repentance and reliance upon God's Word.

a. Key Verses
   
i. **Ezra 7:6 (ESV)** — 6 this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the Law of Moses that the Lord, the God of Israel, had given, and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him.

   ii. **Ezra 7:27–28 (ESV)** — 27 Blessed be the Lord, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify the house of the Lord that is in Jerusalem, 28 and who extended to me his steadfast love before the king and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of the Lord my God was on me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

   iii. **Ezra 9:1–3 (ESV)** — 1 After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. 2 For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.” 3 As soon as I heard this, I tore my garment and my cloak and pulled hair from my head and beard and sat appalled.

   "The presence of Ruth in the canon proves that marriages between Jews and Gentiles who served the Lord were acceptable. Ezra understands that purity cannot exist where men are more concerned with the youth and beauty of their wives than with the content of their children's faith.” – *Old Testament Theology*, Pg. 517

   iv. **Ezra 10:1–5 (ESV)** — 1 While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children, gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly. 2 And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: “We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. 3 Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law. 4 Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do
it.” 5 Then Ezra arose and made the leading priests and Levites and all Israel take an oath that they would do as had been said. So they took the oath.

III. God Sends Nehemiah To Secure Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1-7)

“Nehemiah’s ministry begins in the same general period as Ezra’s. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I (445 B.C.), or about thirteen years after Ezra’s first journey to Jerusalem.” – Old Testament Theology, Pg. 518

God uses another godly leader, Nehemiah, also released by the Persian king, to rebuild the broken down walls of Jerusalem that protect the city from enemies. As in the construction of the temple, heavy opposition arises leading the Jews to work with tools in one hand and weapons in the other. The wall is completed under Nehemiah’s direction and God’s protection. This serves as great encouragement among the Jews, a source of fear among their enemies, and as a foundation of worship of God.

a. Key Verses

i. Nehemiah 1:1–4 (ESV) — 1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel, 2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. 3 And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.” 4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

ii. Nehemiah 1:5–11 (ESV) — 5 And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, 6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. 7 We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses. 8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples, 9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name
dwell there.’ 10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand. 11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” Now I was cupbearer to the king.

“Throughout his prayer, however, there is a clear sense of hope. Just as God was faithful to his covenant promises to bring judgment upon the nation, so there was hope that he would also remain true to his promises to bring salvation and blessing (v. 9). The basis of Nehemiah’s hope is God’s promise in Dt. 30:1-6.” – NIV Compact Bible Commentary, Pg. 305

iii. Nehemiah 2:17–20 (ESV) — 17 Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” 18 And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work. 19 But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” 20 Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.”

iv. Nehemiah 4:15–17 (ESV) — 15 When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. 16 From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, 17 who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.

v. Nehemiah 5:1–6 (ESV) — 1 Now there arose a great outcry of the people and of their wives against their Jewish brothers. 2 For there were those who said, “With our sons and our daughters, we are many. So let us get grain, that we may eat and keep alive.” 3 There were also those who said, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards, and our houses to get grain because of the famine.” 4 And there were those who said, “We have borrowed money for the king’s tax on our fields and our vineyards. 5 Now our flesh is as the flesh of our brothers, our children are as their children. Yet we are forcing
our sons and our daughters to be slaves, and some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but it is not in our power to help it, for other men have our fields and our vineyards.” 6 I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words.

vi. **Nehemiah 6:15–16 (ESV)** — 15 So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. 16 And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem, for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God.

**IV. God’s People Are Called Back To Faithfulness To God’s Word (Nehemiah 8-13)**

Ezra and Nehemiah combine forces to bring God’s Word back to the center of life among God’s people. The Jews at first weep and then rejoice over the truths of the Law. Nehemiah returns to the King of Persia, but comes back to Jerusalem to find God’s children once again playing the harlot. Nehemiah leads the Jews to repentance again and a return to proper worship. This is the close of Israelite history as recorded in the Bible until the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist in the Gospels ~400 year later.

a. **Key Verses**

i. **Nehemiah 8:1–3 (ESV)** — 1 And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the Lord had commanded Israel. 2 So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law.

ii. **Nehemiah 9:1–3 (ESV)** — 1 Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth, and with earth on their heads. 2 And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. 3 And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the LORD their God for a quarter of the day; for another quarter of it they made confession and worshiped the Lord their God.
“So what is the great sin exposed by God’s Word here in chapter 9? Ezra states the answer explicitly: “we have disregarded the commands you gave” (9:10-11).” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 8101

Nehemiah 9:6-37 is one of the best summaries of the history of God’s people, their repeated unfaithfulness, and God’s steadfast faithfulness.

iii. Nehemiah 10:28–29 (ESV) — 28 The rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the Law of God, their wives, their sons, their daughters, all who have knowledge and understanding, 29 join with their brothers, their nobles, and enter into a curse and an oath to walk in God’s Law that was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord and his rules and his statutes.

iv. Nehemiah 12:27 (ESV) — 27, 31, 38 & 43 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres...31 Then I brought the leaders of Judah up onto the wall and appointed two great choirs that gave thanks. One went to the south on the wall to the Dung Gate...38 The other choir of those who gave thanks went to the north, and I followed them with half of the people, on the wall, above the Tower of the Ovens, to the Broad Wall...43 And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

v. Nehemiah 13:1–3 (ESV) — 1 On that day they read from the Book of Moses in the hearing of the people. And in it was found written that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, 2 for they did not meet the people of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them—yet our God turned the curse into a blessing. 3 As soon as the people heard the law, they separated from Israel all those of foreign descent.

“Do you see the pattern? By reading God’s Word and perceiving his holy character, they became more and more aware of their sins and the need to confess them. Yet by reading God’s Word and perceiving his patient love, they became more and more aware of their ability to confess these sins. Scripture reminded them that God is from everlasting to everlasting, and that they could rely on his ancient promises of love.” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 8699
vi. Nehemiah 13:30–31 (ESV) — 30 Thus I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I established the duties of the priests and Levites, each in his work; 31 and I provided for the wood offering at appointed times, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

“[Ezra-Nehemiah] leaves interpreters with both hope and frustration. God has restored Israel to the promised land, to the chosen site of worship, to a secure defensive position, to a set priesthood, to a societal purity and to doctrinal normativeness. Yahweh's sovereignty, mercy, compassion and faithfulness have all once again been proven in real historical circumstances. The people have responded well to these divine attributes and the works the necessarily attend them. A serious remnant serves Yahweh now. Still, long-term, promises await fulfillment. It is clear, though, that the source of further blessing is the God of Scripture, who inspires the remnant's adherence to their relationship to Yahweh and Yahweh's word.” – Old Testament Theology, Pg. 522

Synopsis of Esther

“The theme of this short book is an illustration of the overruling providence of the sovereign God who delivers and preserves His people from the malice of the heathen who would plot their destruction. Although there is no explicit mention of the name of God, in this book, nothing could be clearer than the irresistible power of His omnipotent rule, watching over His covenant people, preserving them from the malignity of Satan in his vain attempt to work through Haman and accomplish the annihilation of the Jewish nation.” – A Survey of Old Testament Introduction, Pg. 463

“The book of Esther might be called the Cinderella story of an orphaned Jewish girl who rises to become the queen of Persia at a crucial time. It is also an etiological story, meaning that it was written, in part, to explain how something began, in this case the Jewish feast of Purim.” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 8919

“The efforts of Mordecai and Esther show that Diaspora Jews can serve God through serving foreign leaders. Such service entails temptation to compromise their convictions. Nor is it without danger, as the books of Esther and Daniel both make clear. Governments, however, often influence people's lives so personally that a God-fearing public servant can do great good.” – Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 1715

Esther

“The book of Esther is set in the reign of Ahasuerus (the biblical name for Xerxes, king of Persia 485-465 BCE)” – Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament, Location 1692
Outline based on *Old Testament Theology*
- Esther 1:1-4:17 -- suggests that the Lord allows his people to endure danger in exile
- Esther 5:1-9:19 -- implies that Yahweh protects Israel's exiles by reversing their fortunes
- Esther 9:20-10:3 -- hints that the Lord is the one that institutes Purim

“God is not so much an implied actor in the drama as he is the author of the script.” – NIV *Compact Bible Commentary, Pg. 309*

I. **A Powerful King Allows For Unfounded Persecution Of The Jews (Esther 1-4)**

The events recorded in Esther occur after the return of the Jews who so desired to the Promised Land, but before the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. God’s children have experienced opposition in the Promised Land, and will face opposition in a foreign land. Esther, a Hebrew, is selected as the queen for the King of Persia. Esther’s uncle, Mordecai, will not bow to Haman, the King’s right-hand man. Therefore, Haman decides to see punishment exacted on all Jews. Haman has the King issue a decree for the slaughter of all of the Jews.

a. Key Verses

i. **Esther 1:1–4 (ESV)** — 1 Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces, 2 in those days when King Ahasuerus sat on his royal throne in Susa, the citadel, 3 in the third year of his reign he gave a feast for all his officials and servants. The army of Persia and Media and the nobles and governors of the provinces were before him, 4 while he showed the riches of his royal glory and the splendor and pomp of his greatness for many days, 180 days.

ii. **Esther 1:19 (ESV)** — 19 If it please the king, let a royal order go out from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes so that it may not be repealed, that Vashti is never again to come before King Ahasuerus. And let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she.

iii. **Esther 2:5–7 (ESV)** — 5 Now there was a Jew in Susa the citadel whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, 6 who had been carried away from Jerusalem among the captives carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had carried away. 7 He was bringing up Hadassah, that is Esther, the daughter of his uncle, for she had neither father nor mother. The young woman had a beautiful figure and was lovely to look at, and when her father and her mother died, Mordecai took her as his own daughter.
iv. Esther 2:16–17 (ESV) — 16 And when Esther was taken to King Ahasuerus, into his royal palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign, 17 the king loved Esther more than all the women, and she won grace and favor in his sight more than all the virgins, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti.

“The writer's point is to show that the hand of God can be seen in the one case just as clearly as the other. God can not only stop the mouths of lion, he can also determine the destiny of kings and queens, if need be, for the sake of his chosen people.” – NIV Compact Bible Commentary, Pg. 310

v. Esther 2:21–22 (ESV) — 21 In those days, as Mordecai was sitting at the king’s gate, Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king’s eunuchs, who guarded the threshold, became angry and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. 22 And this came to the knowledge of Mordecai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in the name of Mordecai.

vi. Esther 3:5–6 (ESV) — 5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage to him, Haman was filled with fury. 6 But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, as they had made known to him the people of Mordecai, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

vii. Esther 4:16–17 (ESV) — 16 “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” 17 Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

“Notice Esther’s faith as well. What does she ask Mordecai? She specifically asks Mordecai to fast—which would include prayer—and to get all the Jews in Susa to do the same. The king does not allow people into his presence unless he first summons them, and she knows her success depends entirely on God’s gracious intervention.” – The Message of the Old Testament, Location 9011

II. A Queen Is Used By God To Protect the Jews (Esther 5:1-9:19)

Esther is used to reveal to the King that she is a Jew who will face destruction under his decree. Esther exposes Haman for his actions in bringing this about. In addition, Haman is replaced by Mordecai as thanks for Mordecai exposing an earlier plot to kill the King.
Haman is executed and the King issues another decree allowing the Jews to protect themselves.

a. Key Verses
   i. Esther 5:14 (ESV) — 14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, “Let a gallows fifty cubits high be made, and in the morning tell the king to have Mordecai hanged upon it. Then go joyfully with the king to the feast.” This idea pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.

   ii. Esther 7:1–6 (ESV) — 1 So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. 2 And on the second day, as they were drinking wine after the feast, the king again said to Esther, “What is your wish, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.” 3 Then Queen Esther answered, “If I have found favor in your sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be granted me for my wish, and my people for my request. 4 For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have been silent, for our affliction is not to be compared with the loss to the king.” 5 Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, “Who is he, and where is he, who has dared to do this?” 6 And Esther said, “A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!” Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

   iii. Esther 8:15–17 (ESV) — 15 Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. 16 The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. 17 And in every province and in every city, wherever the king’s command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

III. The Protection Of The Jews Is Memorialized For Future Generations (Esther 9:20-10:3)

In order to always remember their protection, the Jews begin the annual celebration of the Feast of Purim.

a. Key Verses
   i. Esther 9:20–22 (ESV) — 20 And Mordecai recorded these things and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, 21 obliging them to keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which
the Jews got relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been
turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a
holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for
sending gifts of food to one another and gifts to the poor.

ii. Esther 9:29–32 (ESV) — 29 Then Queen Esther, the daughter of Abihail, and
Mordecai the Jew gave full written authority, confirming this second letter
about Purim. 30 Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the
kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth, 31 that these days of
Purim should be observed at their appointed seasons, as Mordecai the Jew
and Queen Esther obligated them, and as they had obligated themselves and
their offspring, with regard to their fasts and their lamenting. 32 The
command of Queen Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was
recorded in writing.

“The rest of chapter 9 describes the history of the Jewish feast of Purim—
which means ‘Lots’—thus named because of evil Haman’s casting of the lot
(9:18-32). The Jewish year begins in the spring with Passover, which
commemorates Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Yom Kippur—the ‘Day of
Atonement’—follows in the fall. Then Purim, the last festival and occurring in
March, reminds the people that God will preserve them.” – The Message of
the Old Testament, Location 9157

“In mounting up such a multilayered set of ‘coincidences,’ the writer builds his case to the
reader that God is at work in the world both to will and to do his good pleasure, and that all
things work together for good for those who trust him.” – NIV Compact Bible Commentary, Pg.
310

Takeaways from Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther:

• God’s love for His children includes discipline for disobedience, but not abandonment.
  While we might chase after sin, God never let’s go of us.
• God’s Word is central to both obedience and repentance. Without God’s Word we do not
  know what is wrong or what pleases God.
• If God’s people lack Godly leadership, they will quickly seek after other gods. However, if
  God’s people seek and submit to Godly leadership, they will find themselves blessed and a
  powerful force to accomplish God’s purposes in this world.
• As followers of Christ, we should view the events of this world in the context of God’s
  sovereignty. He establishes kingdoms, directs the hearts of leaders, and will even use
  unbelievers to help advance His kingdom.
Works Cited


## Appendix A

### Chronology of the Persian Period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSIAN KING</th>
<th>DATES</th>
<th>BIBLICAL CORRELATION</th>
<th>GREEK CORRELATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CYRUS</td>
<td>539-530</td>
<td>Return of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 1-3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMBYSES</td>
<td>530-522</td>
<td>Rebuilding at Jerusalem stopped (Ezra 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARIUS I</td>
<td>522-486</td>
<td>Haggai and Zechariah prophesy (520)</td>
<td>Greeks defeat Persians at Marathon (490)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Temple completed (516) (Ezra 5-6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XERXES</td>
<td>486-464</td>
<td>Story of Esther (Esther 1-9)</td>
<td>Greeks defeat Persians at Thermopolae (480)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and Salamis (479)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Herodotus 485-425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTAXERXES I</td>
<td>464-423</td>
<td>Return of Ezra (458) (Ezra 7-10)</td>
<td>Golden Age (461-431)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Return of Nehemiah (445) (Nehemiah 1-2)</td>
<td>Pericles (460-429)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prophecy of Malachi (433)</td>
<td>Athens rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARIUS II</td>
<td>423-404</td>
<td>B L E N C E</td>
<td>Peloponnesian Wars (431-404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Athens falls (404)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sparta rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTAXERXES II</td>
<td>404-359</td>
<td>S L E N C E</td>
<td>Socrates (470-399)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Plato (428-348)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aristotle (384-322)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTAXERXES III</td>
<td>359-338</td>
<td></td>
<td>Philip II of Macedon defeats Greeks at Chaeronea in 338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARSES</td>
<td>338-335</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DARIUS III</td>
<td>335-331</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alexander the Great overthrows Persian Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALEXANDER</td>
<td>336-323</td>
<td></td>
<td>Establishment of Greek Empire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament, Pg. 70*