

The Synoptic Gospels of The Old Testament

Chapter 16

Audio Lesson: Old Testament Survey lesson 42



Objective: To learn how God faithfully restored His people to Jerusalem after their captivity.



They sang, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, saying, "For He is good, for His loving kindness is upon Israel forever." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid.

—Ezra 3:11

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

—Romans 11:36

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, along with Esther, are known as the post-captivity history books. The Babylonian captivity was a dividing line in Hebrew history. In fact, when we study the Prophets later on, we will discover that the prophets are classified as pre-captivity, in-captivity, or post-captivity prophets. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther record that period of history that took place after the captivity had ended in which the post-captivity prophets wrote, preached, lived, and died.

The return from the Babylonian captivity came in at least three phases. The first return was for the specific purpose of rebuilding the temple. Soon after that work had begun, those who had returned were distracted by opposition and persecution, and they stopped building until the prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged them to finish what they had started. Years later, Ezra led the second return. This extraordinary priest and scribe was a great teacher of Scripture. Ezra brought a dynamic ministry to the rebuilt temple. Thirteen years after Ezra's return, Nehemiah led a third return. His purpose was to rebuild the wall around the city of Jerusalem. The prophet Malachi was involved with Nehemiah in the rebuilding of the wall.



Ezra and Nehemiah are very similar books. They both teach principles of leadership and of doing God's work in God's way.

1. True or false? The captivity is an important historical landmark for understanding Hebrew history.
2. True or false? Many people consider the books of Ezra and Nehemiah to be “identical twins.”
3. True or false? Judah was taken captive by Babylon and released by Persia.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

4. What was the main purpose of the first return from captivity?
 - a. To rebuild the temple
 - b. To destroy the Canaanites
 - c. To move the temple to another mountain
 - d. To gather forces to strike back at the Persians
5. What was the purpose of the second return under Ezra?
 - a. To rebuild the temple
 - b. To reestablish the worship ministry in the temple
 - c. To drive out the Canaanites
 - d. To find the lost tribes of Israel
6. What was the purpose of the third return under Nehemiah?
 - a. To reestablish the kingdom
 - b. To establish an army
 - c. To repopulate Canaan
 - d. To rebuild the wall around Jerusalem
7. Which of the following is a common theme among Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah?
 - a. Hebrew unity
 - b. Building
 - c. Hebrew dominance
 - d. Peace and prosperity
8. How do the principles in Ezra and Nehemiah apply to God’s people today?
 - a. There is no connection.
 - b. They teach us about the end times.
 - c. They show us how to labor with God in His work.
 - d. They show us how God abandons those who rebel against Him.
9. What do we find in Ezra and Nehemiah that is helpful for leaders?
 - a. Good examples of leadership
 - b. The consequences of a leadership vacuum
 - c. Warnings against moral failure
 - d. The leadership style that God wants all leaders to have

10. What was the nature of Ezra's and Nehemiah's work?
- a. They were both very practical.
 - b. They were both very pastoral.
 - c. Ezra was pastoral and Nehemiah was practical.
 - d. Neither one did God's work in God's way.
11. Which of the following are similarities between the books of Ezra and Nehemiah? (*choose all that apply*)
- a. They both end in defeat and despair.
 - b. They both involve a pagan king supporting God's work in Jerusalem.
 - c. They both begin with a war.
 - d. Neither one describes any enemies.
 - e. They both tell of a spiritual revival among God's people.
12. What did Ezra set his heart on doing?
- a. Learning, keeping, and teaching the Word of the Lord
 - b. Overthrowing the Persians
 - c. Reestablishing the kingdom
 - d. Becoming the king
13. Who is the prime mover behind God's work?
- a. His people
 - b. His leaders
 - c. His country
 - d. Himself
14. What does God do to support His work? (*choose all that apply*)
- a. God hides it from His people so only He can do His work.
 - b. God provides clear guidance to His people so they can do His work.
 - c. God provides everything needed for the work.
 - d. God chooses the most intelligent and capable people for His work.
15. What strategy does Satan often use to keep us from God's best?
- a. He offers us something good in place of what is best.
 - b. He offers us things that are better than what God offers.
 - c. He tempts us with things that are clearly evil.
 - d. Nothing, because he knows we cannot be distracted.



Can you think of any times when you chose something that was good over something God said was best? What areas of your life will you commit to His best today?



Thank God for all of the opportunities and plans He has for you. Ask Him for clear guidance and commit to choose His best every day. Pray for those in leadership that they will be led by God to do God's work God's way.



Going Deeper

1. In what ways do the characters of Ezra and Nehemiah show us that the work of God is a team sport? _____

2. How does the book of Ezra profile distinctive principles that identify, verify and validate a work of God? _____

3. How does the book of Nehemiah profile a leader that God can use to do a work of God? _____

4. How does the book of Nehemiah profile some critical dimensions of a vision? _____

5. How does the book of Ezra demonstrate the reality that the work of God is to be done by the people of God? _____

6. How does the book of Nehemiah demonstrate the “tunnel vision” that a leader of a work of God must have? _____

7. Give several examples of how Ezra demonstrates the priority of the Word of God in the life and ministry of a leader of a work of God. _____
