

Bible Overview: understanding the message in the different books of the Bible.

Video 6—Captivity and Release—Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel

What does this part of the Bible tell us about each of the following?

1. What happened to the kingdom of Judah and why?
2. How long did God say the Jews would be in Babylon?
3. Who was the prophet God put in Babylon to help God's people and witness to the powerful kings?
4. What amazing deliverance did the Lord give to the prophet Daniel?
5. What important things did God bring about for his people under the rule of the Persian Kings?

The book of Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther for knowing where you are as you read your Bible.

Esther 4:14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"

These three books cover approximately the same period in Jewish history. Ezra and Nehemiah were once one the same scroll. Chronicles ended with the Kingdom of Judah being carried off into captivity and Ezra begins with the return of the people under the Persian King Cyrus. A second large contingent led by Ezra returned under the reign of Persian King Artaxerxes. Ezra was probably the author.

The same King Artaxerxes that sent Ezra back had a cupbearer named Nehemiah. Artaxerxes gave him a leave of absence so he could also return to Judah, as governor. Nehemiah could have been the author of this book.

The book of Esther could be placed between Ezra and Nehemiah because between the reigns of Cyrus and Artaxerxes was another Persian king named Xerxes who took Esther as his queen.

The writer, perhaps Ezra, tells the beautiful story of a young Jewish girl who became queen of a foreign nation. Note that the name of God is never mentioned in Esther although we find his presence and guidance throughout. This is a good reminder of how God is continually working behind the scenes to take care of his people. This ends the historical books. Nehemiah is the last we hear from until Jesus is born 400 years later.

Once again, we see how God carefully ruled the events of history and the movements of nations to protect and keep His promise of the Savior.

Daniel

Daniel also lived in Babylon. His book can be divided into two sections: Daniel 1-6 contains the wonderful story of Daniel and his friends, and Daniel 7-12 is mostly prophetic visions. Tells the life, work, faithfulness of the Prophet Daniel (and in chapter 3, three of his friends) and visions God gave him concerning the coming of the Messiah (Christ) and the last days, including a vivid prophecy of the empires that proceed the time of Christ, and then a shadow of the antichrist, the Last Judgment, the ultimate victory of Christ and therefore the victory of God's people and the Resurrection of the Dead.
