

RBCPC
2011 Study Series



Week #8
Study Guide

Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther

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www.rbcpc.org/mark-up-your-bible/

Overview

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah the Israelites return to the land after 70 years of exile in Babylon. Ezra is the priest, guiding the temple restoration and the spiritual renewal of the people in Jerusalem. Nehemiah is the political leader, using his own expertise, yet relying on God's direction for the restoration process.

The book of Esther focuses on the story of how God works "behind the scenes," creating seemingly circumstantial events, to accomplish his purposes.

Scripture Study – Key Passages

Open your Bible and read the following passages:

Ezra 1:2-3

1. Who is speaking in this passage?
2. Why did God give temple building instructions to a pagan king?
3. Who is in control of the exile, return and restoration?
4. What message of "hope" does this carry for non-Christians today?

Nehemiah 6:15-16

1. Who participated in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem?
2. Why did they use some of the "broken" materials from the old wall?
3. What is the spiritual value of using the old materials?
4. What were the enemies afraid of when the wall was completed?

Esther 4:14-16

1. What deliverance is Mordecai referring to? Who will do the "delivering?"
2. Why does Mordecai encourage Esther to think about others, not just herself?
3. What influence(s) could Esther be subject to that might affect her allegiance to the Jews?
4. What spiritual discipline does Esther engage in before she takes action?
5. What does Esther expect to achieve through this discipline?
6. Do you see God at work in this passage? Where?

Esther 9:20-22

1. What is the feast of Purim?
2. Why is it important to celebrate this event which happened over 2000 years ago?
3. What attribute(s) of God does this festival celebrate?

Key Concepts

1. God follows through with the promises he makes through the prophets.
2. God works in the hearts of all rulers, pagan and Jewish.
3. God is at work, and in control, even when his presence is not visibly apparent.

Discuss each of these concepts as applied to:

1. Ezra leading the people out of exile.
2. Rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.
3. Esther saving the Jews from execution.

Reflection

In these books we see God at work in deliverance and restoration. His faithfulness to his promises continues. Reflect upon how many times the Bible has reviewed the genealogies of the Israelites. Notice the value God places on remembering the rich history of both faithful, and unfaithful followers. God continues to offer redemption and restoration to us today.

Prayer

Nehemiah consistently prays for God's direction before he takes action. Right before Nehemiah asks King Artaxerxes to release him and send him to rebuild Jerusalem, he sends an "arrow" prayer to God:

"The king said to me, "What is it you want?" Then I prayed to the God of heaven, and I answered the king, "If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my ancestors are buried so that I can rebuild it."

Nehemiah 2:4-5

God works through the king's heart and Nehemiah's request is granted.

Take a few minutes to send up a simple, spontaneous "arrow" prayer of your own. Rest in the knowledge that God hears you and will respond in *his* timing.

Homework

Read ***Esther 4:9-14***, in preparation for the sermon on Mar. 5/6, "*For Such a Time as This.*" Mark words, or phrases, that stand out to you.

Notes & Reflections:

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