

Bible Snapshots



Post captivity books – Ezra and Nehemiah

Both books are written after the children of Israel begin returning to Jerusalem. In Ezra we have the return of the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which were held captive by Babylon. Ezra, however, does also mention the return of some from the tribe of Levi (2:40) and some who could not even name their lineage (2:59). These all return in at least three waves of returning led by three different men, just as they were carried away in three different waves.

Nehemiah – Rebuilding the Walls Author – Nehemiah (430BC)

Connection with Chronicles and other books

- Continues the story of Ezra and details the final waves of return by God's people.

Facts

- Nehemiah has 13 chapters and is what we might call a historical narrative. It is written primarily from the perspective of Nehemiah.

Themes

- Arise and build – what does it take to build a kingdom that is safe and secure from harm. Certainly a grand example for the church, though the building is far different.
- Uniting the people as a nation through things like public worship and adherence to the letter of the law – certainly another grand point to be observed and practiced by the church.

Key chapters/verse

- 6 – the completion of the wall / 1:3, 11; 6:15, 16

Key phrase / thought

- Arise and build / as one man (8:1-8)

Outline of Nehemiah

1. Nehemiah and the wall – 1-7
 - a. Nehemiah's call
 - b. Nehemiah's survey
 - c. Nehemiah's work
2. Nehemiah and the Nation of Israel
 - a. Restoration of Worship (8)
 - b. Removing the sins (9)
 - c. Re-creating the covenant (10-11)
 - d. Renewing a nation (12-13)



Nehemiah's wall found (12:31, 38)

Summarizing Nehemiah

Nehemiah was a Hebrew in Persia when the word reached him that the Temple in Jerusalem was being reconstructed. He grew anxious knowing there was no wall to protect the city. Nehemiah invited God to use him to save the city. God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, Artaxerxes, who gave not only his blessing, but also supplies to be used in the project. Nehemiah is given permission by the king to return to Jerusalem, where he is made governor.

In spite of opposition and accusations the wall was built and the enemies silenced. The people, inspired by Nehemiah, give tithes of much money, supplies and manpower to complete the wall in a remarkable 52 days, despite much opposition. This united effort is short-lived, however, because Jerusalem falls back into apostasy when Nehemiah leaves for a while. After 12 years he returned to find the walls strong but the people weak. He set about the task of teaching the people morality and he didn't mince words. "I argued with those people, put curses on them, hit some of them and pulled out their hair" (13:25). He reestablishes true worship through prayer and by encouraging the people to revival by reading and adhering to the Word of God.

Captivity and Return

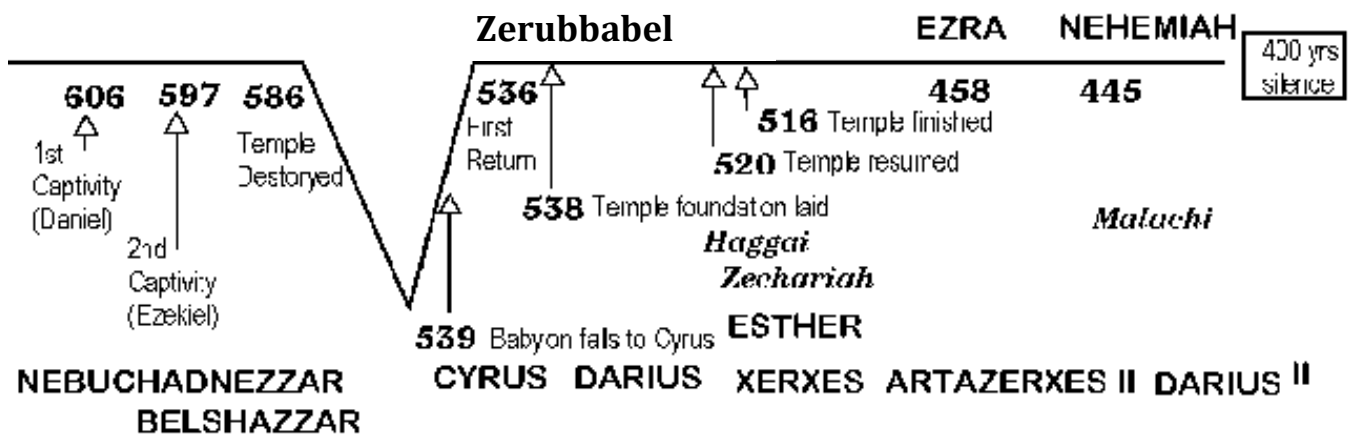


Figure 1: Chronology of the Writing Prophets

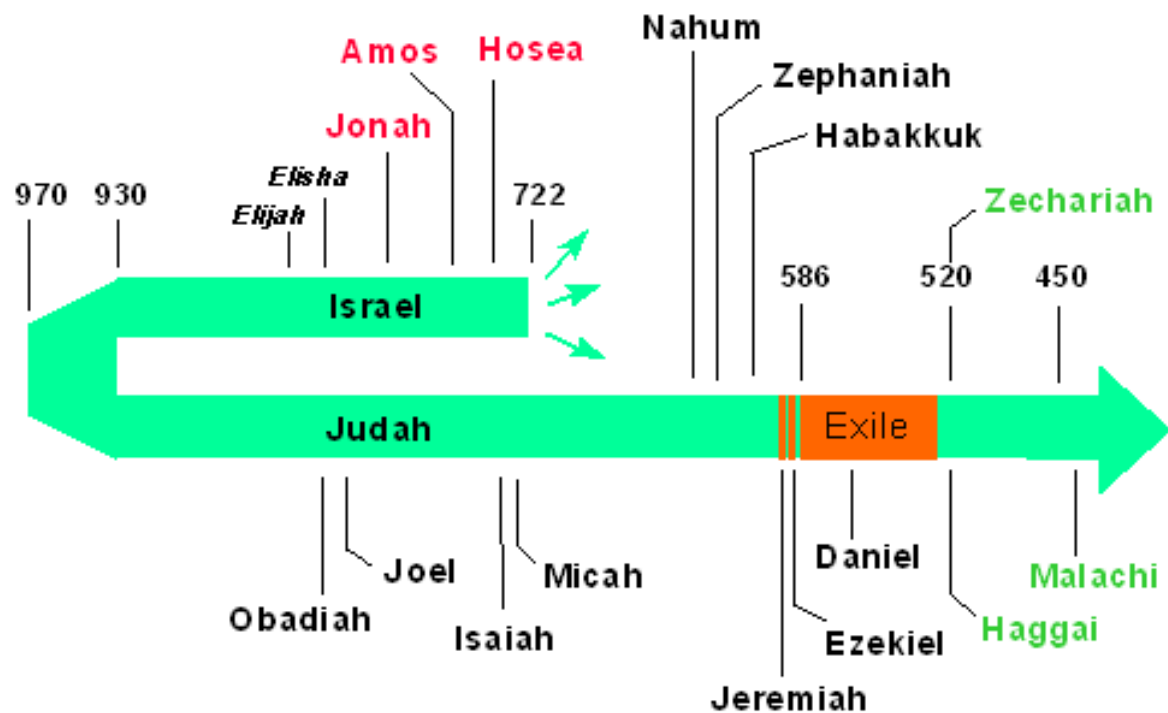


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