

EZRA

This book which bears the name of its probable author, is the logical continuation of the books of I and II Chronicles. Most Bible scholars readily recognize that these two books were most likely written by Ezra. Ezra was a priest, and his writings reflect a perspective of a priest. The book of Ezra is primarily devoted to an account of the period following the exile and the problems that were encountered during that period.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The first part of this chapter (vs.1-4) repeats the concluding verses of the last chapter of the book of II Chronicles. In these opening verses we note the decree that Cyrus made. We learn also that this decree was in fulfillment of the word of the Lord as it came from the prophet Jeremiah, and we also note that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus in order that such a decree might be made. In addition to these things we must make mention of the following: 1) when the Jews went into captivity they were in Babylonian bondage, 2) now a decree is given by Cyrus king of Persia that they may be released and the house of the God of Israel is to be rebuilt, 3) we must note that Cyrus mentions that he is over all of the kingdoms of the earth, and 4) we must therefore conclude that the Babylonians were defeated by the Persians. This fact is further supported by the book of Daniel. In that book we note that Daniel, a Jew in the time of the Babylonian captivity of Nebuchadnezzar, interpreted a dream about an image made of different metals. Each of the metals represented a different kingdom. The first was the kingdom of Babylon and the second was the kingdom of Medo-Persia. It is this second kingdom which was in power during the days of the decree of Cyrus. We therefore note, that the Jews were being freed from their period of captivity and encouraged to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple.
2. The last portion of the chapter details the actual return of the Jews from exiles. (vs.5-11) When they left they were given gifts from those about them. In addition to that, we also note that Cyrus gave them the vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had taken years before at the beginning of their captivity.

CHAPTER TWO

This entire chapter is devoted to a listing of those Jews which returned to the land of Palestine after their captivity. Note that in vs.62ff we note that some of the Jews were not able to fully establish their ancestry as Levites and therefore were not able to serve in the capacity of a priest. In vs. 63 the word 'Tirshatha' simply means governor. His identity is later seen to be Nehemiah. Note also that in vs. 68ff that the people gave freely to the building of the city and the temple.

CHAPTER THREE

1. The first seven verses of this chapter depict the restoration of the worship of the Jews. The altar was rebuilt. The feast of the tabernacle was renewed, and so was the daily burnt offerings and all of the set feasts. Notice that these things were done "as it is written" (vs.2,4). Note also that the temple had not yet been started (vs.6).
2. The last section of this chapter (vs.8-13) depicts the beginning of the actual temple of the Lord and the actions of the people when this work began. When the foundation was laid by the builders the people of Israel rejoiced. The ancient men, who remembered the first temple, wept openly and the people continued to rejoice because of the restoration of the Lord's house.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-16) shows us that the Jews ran into problems during the time of the rebuilding of the temple. We see that adversaries of the Jews came unto Zerubbabel and sought to build with the Jews. Zerubbabel promptly and properly forbade such action. Vs.4ff tells us that these people then sought to weaken the hands of the Jews and frustrate the furtherance of the work. They hired counselors against them and wrote letters unto the kings against the Jews. Such a letter is mentioned in vs.12-16 of this chapter.
2. The last section of the chapter (vs.17-24) shows us that the work of the temple was indeed suspended by Artaxerxes. The cessation of the work continued until the time of Darius king of Persia. A period of about 20 years was involved in this suspension of the work on the temple.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. During this period of time in which the work of the temple was not being completed, prophets came and encouraged the people to continue the work. Two of these prophets were Haggai and Zechariah. (Again, we must remember that simply because books of the Old Testament do not follow in complete chronological order does not mean that some of the books do not directly relate to proceeding books. Here we note that the books of Haggai and Zechariah, which occur toward the end of the Old Testament as we have it, are directly related and contemporary to the actions taking place during the book of Ezra.)
2. Following these admonitions by these prophets we note that the people resumed their work of rebuilding the temple. (vs.2) At that time they were approached by Tatnai and Shetharboznai and others, who questioned them about their rights to be engaged in such a work.
3. When the Jews did not cease from their work, these men wrote a letter unto Darius the king inquiring about the matter. They told the king that they questioned these men about their activities and that they (i.e. the Jews) told them that they were rebuilding the house that was built by a great king of Israel (Solomon) and that such work was ordered to be completed by Cyrus the king of Persia when the Jews were released from their captivity. The men then encouraged Darius to see if these commands of Cyrus were on record.

CHAPTER SIX

1. When a search was made of the records of the king, it was found that indeed there had been a decree made by Cyrus that the Jews should establish a house of worship in Jerusalem. Within the decree were instructions concerning the size of the temple, commands that the silver and gold which Nebuchadnezzar had taken be returned, and other information. Darius then informed these two men that they were not to hinder the work of the rebuilding of the temple of God, but that they were to help by providing those things necessary for the work. Should anyone fail in this mission, they were to be hanged. (vs.1-12)
2. Based upon the word of King Darius, the men returned to help the Jews. The elders of Israel prospered during the days of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and the temple of the Lord was completed during the 6th year of the reign of Darius. (vs.13-15)
3. The last section of the chapter (vs.16-22) depicts the restoration of the feast of the passover, the dedication of the house of God, the division of the priests and the Levites, and the purification of the priests and the Levites.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The first 10 verses of this chapter establish the fact that Ezra was a priest. His genealogy is given and he is shown to be a descendant of Aaron, and therefore is fit and proper to be a priest. He went up to Jerusalem during the reign of Artaxerxes. Note verse 10. (For a brief commentary on this verse see page 1 of your notes.)
2. The majority of this chapter (vs.11-26) is a copy of the letter which Artaxerxes gave to Ezra as he went up to Jerusalem. The basic thrust of the letter is that Ezra was to be provided with anything that he needed in order to carry on the work of the Lord.
3. The last two verses of this chapter are a thanksgiving which Ezra voices for the commands of the king which enabled him (i.e. Ezra) to do what was necessary for the work of the rebuilding the temple.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. The first 14 verses of chapter 8 provide us with a list of those who went with Ezra to Jerusalem.
2. The second section of the chapter (vs.15-20) depicts Ezra's call for the Levites to come to him. Notice in vs. 20 that these men "were expressed by name". The phrase does not just mean that they all had names, but it rather means that all of them were able to establish the fact that they were true descendants of Levi and were therefore duly qualified to be priests.

3. The following section of the chapter portrays the account of the fast which Ezra and the Levites kept (vs.21-23). Notice that Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for help because he they had told the king that God would protect them. When they fasted and besought the Lord, he was entreated of them.
4. The next section of the chapter (vs.24-30) simply depicts the commission of the treasures for the priests.
5. The last section of the chapter (vs.31-36) tells us of Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER NINE

In this chapter we note that Ezra was informed of the sins of the Levites. They (i.e. the Levites) had not separated themselves from the people of the lands. They were practicing some of the Canaanite abominations, marrying foreign wives, and mingling with the people of the land. All of these things were sinful in the sight of the Lord. When Ezra was told of this he rent his garment and plucked his hair (signs of mourning and discontent). Later in the evening he engaged in prayer with God. Verses 6-15 constitute the prayer that he offered up to God in behalf of the children of Israel. He prayed saying that after all that God had done for Israel, Israel still sinned in his (i.e. God's) sight. Within the prayer Ezra mentions the sins of the people of Judah which were direct assaults against the will of God and how terrible these things must be in God's sight.

CHAPTER TEN

1. The first part of this chapter (vs.1-17) details the agreement made concerning those who had taken foreign wives. The people were to come to Jerusalem in three days, or else forfeit their possessions. They were to put away all of the strange wives which they married in transgression of the covenant of God and to offer sacrifice for their sins.
2. The last part of the chapter (vs.18-44) is a listing of those who put away their foreign wives.

EZRA: A REVIEW!

Though this book is the logical continuation of the books of Chronicles, it must be mentioned that this book does not chronologically follow everything that happened during the period of restoration. The first six chapters of the book detail the rebuilding of the temple of the Lord. The work was suspended due to the underhandedness of the Samaritans, for a period of about 20 years. Finally, during the days of Darius, the temple was completed. The last section details the work of Ezra (ch.7-10). Under Zerubbabel in the first 6 chapters the temple was completed, but under Ezra further reformation was carried out. It must be noted that between chapters 6 & 7 a period of 50-60 years occurs. It was during this period of time that the priests fell into the problem of marrying foreign wives, which problem was resolved during the last chapters of the book. We must also remember that the book of Ezra opens up for us a new period of Biblical history. On page four of our notes we see the twelfth period being that of restoration. The Jews, who were in captivity for 70 years in Babylon, are now returning to their native homeland. There they rebuild the temple of the Lord and re-institute the principles of worship which God had originally established during the days of Moses. Within this book we note the all-important principles of restoration of God's will. We also note the construction of the second temple (the first having been built by Solomon). We note also the influence of the Samaritans upon the work of the rebuilding of the temple. In addition to that we are made aware of the positive influence exerted by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah as they encouraged the people to continue with the building of the temple. We also learn of the providence of God. Through the decrees of two Gentile kings (Cyrus and Darius), the Jews are allowed to return to their promised land and rebuilt the house of God. The opening chapter of the book specifically states that God was responsible for the decree made by Cyrus. In addition to that, we note God's praise for conviction. When the Samaritans came to Zerubbabel to offer their help, Zerubbabel refused their help...and rightly so. This took conviction. We also learn of God's prejudice against foreign marriages and God's penalty for disobedience with regard to such. The reforms of Ezra (who was a descendant of Hilkiyah the priest during the reform of Josiah) are impressive. Ezra is portrayed as a man who truly sought to do the will of the Lord (Ezra 7:10) and his influence and his godly demeanor is demonstrated in his prayer in chapter nine for the sins of the Levites and the children of Israel.

NEHEMIAH

This book forms a continuation of the same period as that in the book of Ezra. In the Hebrew Canon both books were formerly joined together as one. Nehemiah was the civic or political leader of the Jews. Ezra was a spiritual leader. The book of Ezra centered around the rebuilding of the temple; the book of Nehemiah centers around the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. It is thought by many scholars that Ezra was also the author of this portion of the book as well as that of the portion which bears his name.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The opening verses of this chapter indicate the sad situation that the city of Jerusalem was in (vs.1-3). The remnant that had returned to Judah and Jerusalem were in affliction. The walls of the city were broken down and the gates were burned with fire. This condition was reported to Nehemiah who at the time of hearing this report served in the palace of Artaxerxes the king.
2. The remaining verses of the chapter (vs.4-11) depicts the prayer which Nehemiah offered up in behalf of the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Note that in vs.8, Nehemiah makes reference to the threat which God made of dispersing the Jews throughout the nations if they were to be disobedient to him.

CHAPTER TWO

1. In the initial section of this chapter (vs.1-10) Nehemiah obtains the permission of Artaxerxes to go to the land of Judah and help his brethren rebuild the walls of the city of Jerusalem. The king granted him that request and in addition to that, the king gave him letters for the governors beyond the river that they should assist Nehemiah in the rebuilding of the walls of the city. Note that in verse 10 we learn that Sanballat and Tobiah were grieved when they learned that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.
2. In the final section of the chapter (vs.11-20) Nehemiah encourages the people to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. After he traveled around the city and saw its ruined condition, Nehemiah instilled within the people of the city a desire to rebuild the walls. Note that vs. 18 states this was a "good work". In the midst of this, however, there were still mockers (vs.10). Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem laughed the people to scorn, but Nehemiah let them know that it was God's will that this effort prospered.

CHAPTER THREE

This entire chapter lists the builders of the wall, their city of origin, and the duties that they performed in the building of the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. In the opening section of the chapter (vs.1-3) we learn that the intensity of the opposition to the building of the wall increased. Sanballat was wroth and filled with indignation and mocked the Jews. In verse 2 we note the questions that he rhetorically asked the army of Samaria. In the following verse Tobiah said that if a fox ran into the wall which the Jews were building the wall would break down. Such was the nature of the ridicule that the Jews were subject to.
2. In the following portion of this chapter (vs.4-12) we note that Nehemiah prayed unto the Lord asking him to turn the reproach of his enemies upon themselves. The people continued in their efforts...for they had a mind to work. When Sanballat and Tobiah and the others heard of the continued efforts of the Jews, they were that much more angry. They conspired to come against the city and to fight, but the Jews were ready. They began to set watches throughout the day and the night.
3. In the last section of chapter four we note the plans of Nehemiah to arm the men (vs. 13-23). They were encouraged not to be afraid but to remember the Lord. Nehemiah instructed them to fight for their families and houses and later we note that every one of the men returned to his work. From that time onward, half of the men worked while the other half stood guard over the walls. As the work grew and the men became separated upon the wall, a system of sounding trumpets was established to notify the men of any possible trouble.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. In the first five verses of the chapter we note the problems that were caused among the

people because of debt, interest, and bondage. The rich were taking advantage of the poor.

2. Nehemiah saw to it that this sort of practice was abolished (vs.6-13). He spoke to the nobles among the people and encouraged them to discontinue their practices of levying so much interest. The nobles agreed, and at Nehemiah's command, they restored the lands and the monies which they had acquired from the poor. They made an oath that they would not do as they had done again...and they did according to the promise.
3. The final section of this chapter demonstrates something about the character of Nehemiah. First, we must remember that as the cupbearer to the king he was in a position of prominence and influence. He requested to be allowed to come to the land of Judah to aid in the rebuilding of the walls, and came to be governor of the land. Though he was the appointed governor, he did not draw the wages and luxuries that a governor would normally draw, but rather he lived on what was necessary so that the work would not be hindered and because of his fear (respect) of the Lord. In this notable example lies a lesson for us all.

CHAPTER SIX

1. As the work continued on the walls, the opposition grew more and more determined to stop the work. In the opening section of the chapter (vs.1-14) we learn that Sanballat sent messengers unto Nehemiah four times, calling him to come to the villages of the plain of Ono to meet together. Verse informs us that Sanballat thought to do him mischief. The fifth time Sanballat sent a letter to Nehemiah saying that he heard that the Jews were going to rebel and make Nehemiah their king and such was the reason for the building of the wall. Nehemiah informed him that these were only the imaginations of Sanballat's heart. Later, Shemaiah sought to influence Nehemiah to hide in the temple to save his life, but Nehemiah refused. Later, we are told that Shemaiah was hired by Tobiah and Sanballat to do this thing that they might catch Nehemiah in something wrong. All of these attempts failed.
2. In the last section of the chapter we learn that the wall around the city was finished in 52 days (vs.15-19). When the enemies of the people of the city learned about this accomplishment, they were cast down in their own eyes for they realized that this work was done by the Lord (vs.16). In the last two verses we learn that some of the nobles of Judah were related to Tobiah and were therefore influenced by him.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. The first part of the chapter (vs.1-4) simply details the appointment of rulers over the different parts of Jerusalem.
2. The second portion of the chapter lists the names of the returning exiles and their possessions (vs.5-73).

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. The first section of this chapter (vs.1-2) provides us with an account of the reading of the law of the Lord by Ezra to the people of the land. The law was read from morning until midday and the people wept when they heard the law of the Lord read aloud. The Levites and Ezra and Nehemiah were all involved in teaching the people that they (i.e. the people) might understand the law. When all of the people understood, they were told to go their way, to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and to send portions unto those who had nothing prepared. The people went away and it was because they understood the words that were declared unto them. Such should be the life of the Christian today. When he understands what the Bible says, he should live that teaching out in his life.
2. The last section of the chapter details the institution of the feast of the tabernacles among the people of the restoration of the land (vs.13-18).

CHAPTER NINE

1. The first few verses of this chapter (vs.1-3) informs us that the people of Israel gathered together on a certain day and fasted. In addition to that they read in the book of the law of the Lord $\frac{1}{2}$ of the day and worshiped the Lord and confessed $\frac{1}{2}$ of the day.
2. The largest part of the chapter (vs.4-38) depicts the confession of the priests and Levites. The confession includes a brief history of the children of Israel and all of

the things which God did for them to help them. The prayer contains many fervent expressions of the sins of the children of Israel and numerous mentions of the times in which they broke different aspects of the law. Toward the end of the prayer we note that they praised God for his long-suffering and his mercies in that he patiently endured the sins of the people and was just in all of his actions. The conclusion of the chapter states that these people were to enter into a covenant with God. [Note: Verse 14 of this chapter is a good verse to remember when talking to any religious group that thinks that the Sabbath was a divinely ordained commandment from the beginning of creation and therefore binding upon all men since that time, including us today. This verse states that the law of the Sabbath was only made known to the Jews when Moses was upon mount Sinai. The language indicates that such was the first knowledge of this ordinance to the Jews, and that it was not made known prior to this time. Having demonstrated this to these religious groups, it is much easier to show that the Sabbath is not an everlasting command and is therefore not binding upon Christians today.]

CHAPTER TEN

1. The first 28 verses of chapter ten list those who sealed the covenant mentioned in the closing verses of the preceding chapter.
2. The remaining part of the chapter contains commitments made by the rest of the people of the land (vs.29-39). Some of these commitments were: 1) not to marry foreign people, 2) not to buy on the Sabbath or any holy day, 3) to support the work of the temple, 4) to provide wood for the offerings, 5) to give their first fruits, and 6) not to forsake the house of the Lord.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

This entire chapter simply details and lists the residents of Jerusalem and the surrounding cities and areas.

CHAPTER TWELVE

1. The first 26 verses of this chapter list the priests and the Levites who went up with Zerubbabel.
2. Verses 27-43 depicts the account of the dedication of the wall of the city of Jerusalem and the names of many of those who participated in the dedication.
3. The 1st section of the chapter (vs.44-47) depicts the restoration of the temple offices.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

1. When the law was read in the midst of the people, a passage was read indicating that the children of Israel were not to have the Ammonite or the Moabite to come into the congregation of the Lord. Verse 3 informs us that when they heard this part of the law they separated from themselves all of the mixed multitude.
2. In the next few verses (vs.3ff) we learn that one of the priests had prepared a chamber for Tobiah, but Tobiah was an Ammonite (ch.2:10). When Ezra came to the city of Jerusalem he commanded that the chambers be cleansed. In addition to this, Ezra learned that there were other discrepancies involved in the keeping of the temple. These matters were brought to the attention of the rulers (vs.11).
3. In addition to these matters Ezra sought to straighten out problems concerning the selling and buying of food on the Sabbath (vs.15-22) and problems concerning the marrying of foreign women (vs.23-28).
4. The last few verses informs us that Ezra cleansed them from all strangers and that he appointed the priests, every one in his business.

NEHEMIAH: A REVIEW

The book of Nehemiah was initially joined together with the book of Ezra in the Hebrew Old Testament. Both of the books are involved with the same general period of time. Ezra mainly involves the rebuilding of the temple and Nehemiah mainly involves the building of the wall of the city of Jerusalem. It must be mentioned that Nehemiah was just about the last historical figure to be addressed in the Old Testament. All of the other materials subsequent to this book took place either contemporary with Nehemiah or prior to the time of the life of Nehemiah. There was a period of about four hundred years between the Old

Testament prophets and the coming of John the Baptist. The book of Nehemiah presents us with the last in a series of three stages of reform in the land of Palestine. One of the most important elements to be emphasized in this work (and in Ezra) is that God, though dissatisfied with the way that Judah conducted herself and therefore justified in sending her into captivity, did not give up on his people. The recurring theme of the remnant is once more seen here. As the people are to return to Jerusalem they do so first under the leadership of Zerubbabel, then under that of Ezra, and finally under the direction of Nehemiah. Though his work is often described as mainly civic and political, we must not overlook the spiritual foundation that was behind it. Jerusalem was a city of utmost importance in the Jewish way of life. It was a place of political importance, but primarily it was a place of religious importance. It was there that the temple of Solomon was built; there the religious life and worship of all Jews revolved. Nehemiah left the place at the king's side to come to a land that God promised to return to the Jews if they would reform. His attitude is commendable. How easy it would have been to remain in the king's service and to forget about Israel. But Nehemiah saw the plight of the Jews and was concerned enough to get personally involved. The character of Nehemiah affords us with numerous examples worthy of imitation: 1) he was an intensely prayerful man (study the prayers in the book as a personal study); 2) he was an uncompromising man when it came to God's will and word. He refused to be intimidated by the verbal abuse given by Sanballat, Tobiah and others. When Sanballat sent numerous petitions to him encouraging him to meet in the plains of Ono, Nehemiah refused to leave the work to come down. When a false prophet came to urge him to seek sanctuary in the temple, he refused to enter in even to save his own life as it was being threatened. Such attitudes are favorable in God's sight. 3) Nehemiah worked with the people. Not only did the people have a mind to work...so did Nehemiah. 4) Nehemiah was unselfish. When Nehemiah came to the aid of Israel, he did so without taking more than what he needed. He could have taken "the bread of the governor" (ch.5:14), but he only took what he needed to provide for himself and his household. Because of this personal example in his life, he was better prepared to convince the nobles of the city to curtail their habits of charging interest to their poor brethren. Nehemiah did not command them to do something he was not willing to do, but rather he commanded them to do that which he himself was not only willing to do but that which he was already doing. We also learn from the book of Nehemiah (and Ezra) the importance of the law in the reform of Judaism as God wanted it. Several times within the two books large portions of space are allocated to an account of the reading of the law. We must remember, that for all intensive purposes, the law had almost faded from Israel prior to the time of their captivity. Several times among the kings of Judah do we note that reforms were started of those aspects of the law which had not been kept since the times of the judges or the times of Samuel. Now, the law is being exalted to the position which it was always intended to occupy. God was keeping his promises to the Jews because they were keeping the laws of the Lord. Another important theme depicted in the book of Nehemiah is the willingness of the people to repent of their sins. When they were informed of their sins, even though it required a lot of sacrifice to do so, they gave their sins up. We note that the people were misusing the Sabbath, but they corrected that matter. We learn that the people had married foreign wives, but they corrected that matter. We are told also of the impurities of the priests, and these matters were also corrected. Such an example is important to us today. Another, very important, theme is seen described below:

"Satan is not greatly concerned about a dead or degenerate Church. It is the church on the wall of Zion with sword or trowel, set for the upbuilding and defense of the kingdom of God that causes Satanic concern and stimulates active opposition."
[Dickson Analytical Bible, p. 609]

When we as Christians are loafing and generally avoiding the work that we are commissioned to do, Satan is not going to be too concerned. Note that it was not until Nehemiah began to rally the Jews to build the wall that Sanballat and his companions began their campaign of constant criticism and condemnation. They seemed to be happy before the building started. Likewise, Satan will awake to cause problems for the church when the church begins to, and continues to, perform the mission that the Lord gave to her. Throughout it all, the Lord was with Nehemiah and the children of Israel...he will be with us as we build the walls of the faith today.

ESTHER

Historically, this book takes place about the same period of time discussed in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra. The location, however, is quite different. While the previous two books focused attention upon the returning exiles, this book centers around those Jews which remained in the countries where they were help captive. The book centers around the life of one of these Jews, a woman named Esther, who became queen of Persia and Media. Through her influence she was able to avert the senseless slaying of the Jews in the provinces of the king.

CHAPTER ONE

1. The opening verses of this chapter (and book) set the stage for the rest of the book. King Ahasuerus began to conduct feasts for his princes and nobles. At the same time, the queen, Vashti, made a feast for the women in the royal house. (vs.1-9)
2. The following section of the chapter depicts the king's request for Vashti to show the people and the princes her beauty. She refused to submit to the request, and king became angry. (vs.10-12)
3. In the last section of the chapter (vs.13-22) the wise men and counselors of the king advised him that he should put Vashti away as the king's queen and select another. The saying pleased the king and he consented to the advice. Note that these things were done supposedly to let every woman know her place. The news of this decision was published throughout the provinces of the king.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Following the dismissal of Vashti as queen, a search began for a young maiden who might take her place (vs.1-18). Officers were appointed in the different provinces to gather together all the fair young virgins unto the palace of the king. There the king would decide which one pleased him. One of the maidens brought was Esther, a Jew. Her mother and father were dead and she was raised by her relative Mordecai. She was instructed by Mordecai not to tell the king that she was a Jew...and she did not tell him. In vs. 17 we note that the king found favor in Esther above all of the women called, and it was her that he made his queen. A great feast was given in her honor.
2. The last part of the chapter informs us of the fact that Mordecai on one occasion saved the life of the king from two men who sought to conspire against him. This was made known unto the king by Esther. The men were found out, hanged, and the event was recorded in the records before the king. (vs.19-23)

CHAPTER THREE

1. After these events Ahasuerus promoted a man by the name of Haman above all of the princes that were in his court. All of the people paid their respects to Haman and bowed down before him, but Mordecai would not do so. As a result Haman became very annoyed and sought to do Mordecai harm.
2. Haman went before the king and informed him that there was a people living in the land that had different laws than that of the rest of the people and they kept not the laws of the king. They were, therefore, not profitable for the king to allow them to remain. Haman then asked for the money to pay that these people might be destroyed. The king granted Haman the money and ordered a decree made and declared throughout the provinces of the kingdom. The decree set the date for the destruction of this people, the Jews.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. When Mordecai learned of these things he began to mourn in sackcloth and ashes near the king's gate. Esther sent to inquire of him why he was doing this and Mordecai informed her, through the messenger, of the deed that Haman committed.
2. Mordecai encouraged Esther to go before the king to make request for the Jews. He told her that she too, because she was a Jew, could lose her life. Mordecai further said that it was quite possible that God saw to it that she was placed in just this position in order to help her people.
3. In the closing verses of the chapter we learn that Esther committed herself to speak to the king about this matter, even if it were to cost her her life.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Esther donned her royal apparel and went before the king to make her request known to him. When she came to him he proclaimed that her request would be made, even to the half of the kingdom. Esther requested a banquet to be made with Haman to be present. The king granted that request and at the banquet asked her further about her requests. Rather than giving the request she asked for another banquet at which time she would make known her wishes. Again, Haman was to be invited to this banquet. (vs.1-8)
2. In the last part of the chapter we learn that Haman thought a great deal about his recent honors from the king and the queen. He boasted of his advancement to all of his friends and family, yet in spite of all this he was still angered because Mordecai would not bow before him. At the advice of his friends and his wife Haman sought to obtain the king's permission to slay Mordecai by hanging him. Even before asking the king about this matter, Haman caused the gallows to be built. (vs.9-14)

CHAPTER SIX

1. On that very night king Ahasuerus was not able to sleep and he commanded that the book of the chronicles be brought before him (vs.1-3). The books were brought and read before the king.
2. In the midst of the reading what was written in the book, the king was reminded of the incident in which Mordecai reported the conspiracy against Ahasuerus. The king asked what honor was bestowed upon Mordecai for this favor. The servants of the king told him that no honor was given to Mordecai. (vs.3)
3. Haman came to the court of the king in order to obtain the permission to hang Mordecai. When he came in the king asked him what sort of honor should be given to a man that the king sought to honor. Haman, thinking that the king spoke of himself (i.e. Haman), called for the king's robe and crown and horse to be given to the man, and for the man's honor to be proclaimed before the people. Ahasuerus agreed and commanded these things be done for Mordecai by Haman. Haman, humiliated by the event, went home to mourn. When his friends heard of this they were sure that he would fall before Mordecai and the Jews. While they were talking Esther was busy preparing the next feast for Haman and the king. (vs.4-14)

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. In the initial portion of the chapter (vs.1-6) Esther makes her request known unto the king. She informs him of the plot to slay her people (the Jews) and she identifies Haman as the originator of this plan.
2. Subsequently Haman is hanged for his deeds and the king's wrath was pacified. (vs.7-10)

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. In the first two verses we learn that Mordecai is honored and placed over the house of Haman. (vs.1-2)
2. In the second section of this chapter Esther asks the king to reverse the request of Haman to slay the Jews. Ahasuerus granted her the request. (vs.3-8)
3. The last section of the chapter details the enactment of the new letter from the king which authorized the Jews to retaliate should anyone seek to carry out the former order which Haman requested. (vs.9-17) The Jews rejoiced over this event, and many of the people of the land became Jews for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

CHAPTER NINE

1. The first part of the chapter (vs.1-19) informs us of those who attempted to fulfill the initial order that Haman asked for, and their resulting defeat at the hand of the Jews. As a result of the Jews' victory, Mordecai grew in fame and prominence in the sight of all the people. Following the victory of the Jews, the sons of Haman were slain and hung upon the gallows.
2. The last section of the chapter (vs.20-32) informs us of the origin of the feast of Purim. The Jews were commanded to keep these days because of their victory over their enemies who had cast Pur (lots).

CHAPTER TEN

This short chapter simply records the power and acts of Ahasuerus and the greatness ascribed to Mordecai who sought the wealth of his people.

ESTHER: A REVIEW!

As the book of Ruth shows us a different view of life among the Jews during the period of the Judges, so Esther shows us a different view of life among the Jews during the time of the return to and the restoration of the land of Palestine. The events of this book take place in the land of Persia and primarily in the courts of the king of that country. The central figure of the book is Esther and secondary space is devoted to Mordecai, the man who raised her and taught her. The Jews are in a position of possibly being exterminated in the provinces of the king. Because of such a threat, it is quite natural to note that they were afraid and were mourning these affairs. Esther, who replaced the former queen, was in a position to be of influence for her people...and she used that position even though she might lose her life. This tells us something very important about the character of Esther. Imagine the devotion that she must have had for her people to be willing to die in order to try to help them. She informed the king of the plot to slay the Jews and through her position and her closeness to the king, the threat of extermination dimmed and the Jews once again had their hopes. Throughout all of this short book, we must never cease to be impressed for the provisions which God makes for his people. Mordecai said that God may have placed Esther in such a position "for such a time as this". Her life therefore corresponds with that of Joseph who saved his family from extinction and famine hundreds of years earlier. We must also note the bad effects that fame and popularity brought to Haman. Because of his promotions in the court of Ahasuerus, Haman became quite proud and boastful and arrogant. Such provides us with an example of what not to be in our own lives. We must always seek to do what we can for God's glory and not our own. The fact that God will take care of his people is seen not only in his general providence for the Jews in Persia, but it is also seen in the fact that Mordecai's faithfulness to the will of God was rewarded. Regardless of how bad things seem to be, God is always in control.

JOB

This book deals with one of the most important themes in the Bible and in human existence today, the problem of pain, suffering, and evil. When the events of this book took place are not known, but then the time of the book is not near as important as the context. Job is seen to be a wealthy man. He is tempted by Satan, yet in the midst of all of the temptation he does not give up his faith. Through the example set here we all are encouraged to remain steadfast in our faith come what may.

CHAPTER ONE

1. In the opening verses to the chapter we are informed of the great wealth that Job possesses and of his uprightness in the sight of the Lord (vs.1-5).
2. The second section depicts Satan seeking to obtain permission from the Lord to tempt Job. Note that the Lord stated that there was none like Job in the earth, but that Satan indicated that Job only served the Lord for the possessions that he had. He quite plainly stated that if Job were afflicted he would turn from God. The Lord told Satan that he (i.e. Satan) had all of Job's possessions in his power to do as he would, only he was prohibited from actually and physically afflicting Job himself. In this we learn that I Corinthians 10:13 is true. God did not allow Satan to tempt Job without limitations; there were restrictions.
3. The concluding part of the chapter (vs.13-22) shows the actual losses that Job incurred. He lost his family and his possessions. Upon learning of this he went into a period of mourning, but in all of this "Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Note that in verse 21 Job expresses a thought that was not true...he said that the "Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away". God did not take Job's possessions, but rather it was Satan who had done so. This expression is often used in our lives when someone dies. We often say "when it's time, it's time" and other such expressions as if fate controls our lives. We must realize that things occur in our lives that are not part of God's will. If a man killed himself would we say "God took him from us"? No, we would not. This man was responsible for the act, which act went against God's will. Should we say "God took them" when teenagers are drinking and driving and some of them are killed in an automobile accident? Again, the answer is no. These people brought their deaths upon themselves. God was not responsible. We must also note,