

1. Ezra groups his material topically, not chronologically.
2. He begins with the opposition the Jews received to the rebuilding of the Temple and the city.
 - A. Cambyses and the Pseudo-Smerdis were the 2 rulers (unnamed in Scripture) the enemies of the Jews convinced to stop the rebuilding.
 - B. Xerxes and Artaxerxes were the rulers when the opposition came to the completion of the walls of Jerusalem.
3. Chronological order:
 - A. The decree to rebuild the Temple - Cyrus (539-530 BC)
 - B. The rebuilding is stopped under Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis.
 - C. The Temple is rebuilt - Darius (522-486 BC)
 - D. Renewed opposition to the rebuilding of Jerusalem is supported by Xerxes (485-465 BC) and Artaxerxes (464-424 BC).
 - E. Nehemiah wins the favor of Artaxerxes and gains permission to complete the walls.
4. Key people:
 - A. Zerubbabel - the grandson of King Jehoiachin (the son of either Shealtiel or Pedaiah - perhaps the result of a Levirate marriage), born in exile, a prince of Judah and principal actor in the rebuilding
 - B. Haggai and Zechariah - spiritual leaders who stood with Zerubbabel amid all the opposition and committed themselves to the rebuilding of the Temple. (There was a gap of 16 years between the ceremonies laying the foundations of the temple due to the opposition.)
 - C. Shimei, Rehum and Tattenai - enemies of the Jews and officials of the Trans-Euphrates Province (Palestine)
 - D. Archaeologists have discovered thousands of clay tablets in Persepolis with official correspondence to Darius, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes I.
5. The rift between the Samaritans and the Jews:
 - A. Assyria captured the Northern Kingdom of Israel, deported much of the population, and repopulated Israel with other conquered peoples. The newcomers intermarried with the Jews left behind. They added the worship of their gods to the worship of Jehovah (syncretism).
 - B. The "new" Samaritans wanted to help rebuild the Temple of "one of their gods." When this help was refused, they became the enemies of Jewish resettlement. The rift was deep and bitter and hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans ran deep.
6. When Darius took the throne of Persia, the rebuilding of the Temple proceeded. He was also involved in a project to build an Egyptian temple.
7. A rebuilt Temple meant the feasts could again be celebrated. The Passover was reinstated in 515 BC. Sacrifices were again possible (upon which forgiveness of sin was dependent.)
8. Zerubbabel will be mentioned again in Nehemiah, but he pretty much disappears from the story at this time.

1. Psalm 138 may have been written by David, but it was used so often by Haggai and Zechariah that it became “their” Psalm.
2. Haggai was a prophet and may have been a priest also. He was a powerful preacher.
3. Opposition caused the work on the Temple to cease from 536 to 520 BC.
4. The Book of Haggai contains excerpts of his sermons, that God used to get the people motivated to begin the work again. “The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai...”
 - A. Sermon #1 - Their priorities were wrong. When they began the work again, God’s message was, “I am with you.”
 - B. Sermon #2 - The old people are discouraged about the inferiority of this new Temple. “Be strong. I am with you...Do not fear...the desired of all nations will come and I will fill this house with my glory.”
 - C. Sermon #3 - Their unwillingness to rebuild the Temple has kept God from blessing them. When they obey, His response is: “From this day on I will bless you.”
 - D. Sermon #4 - It is addressed to Zerubbabel and says, “...I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you...” He was a very important figure to the Jews and is noted in the Apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus.
5. Relevance of the Book of Haggai: Misplaced priorities - put God’s work first and He is always ready to bless.
6. Psalm 138
 - A. “Before the gods I will sing your praise.” This is an acknowledgement that other people worship false gods, which do not exist, but there can be demons behind the idols of wood and stone.
 - B. The Bible teaches monotheism. Most idol worshippers are polytheists.
 - C. This Psalm fits the situation of Haggai and Zechariah so well because:
 - 1) It mentions the Temple.
 - 2) It instructs us to praise God for His love and faithfulness - His promise to return them from exile had been fulfilled.
 - 3) Verse 3 - “...you made me stouthearted and bold.” (Haggai)
 - 4) Verse 6 - “...He looks upon the lowly.” (He sent them home with Cyrus’ decree).
 - 5) Verse 7 - “Though I walk in the midst of trouble you preserve my life.” (The 16 years of opposition)
 - 6) Verse 7 - “You stretch out your hands against the anger of my foes.” Darius rescinds the stoppage ordered given by Xerxes and Artaxerxes and commands Israel’s enemies to leave them alone.
 - 7) Verse 8 - “The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me.” Comforting to Zerubbabel and comforting to us!

1. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai. Along with Zerubbabel they were the key men behind the rebuilding of the Temple.

2. It opens with a call to repentance. “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Return to me and I will return to you.’” God is constant - He blesses obedience and punishes rebellion.

3. The Lord Almighty:
 - A. The Lord of Hosts - The hosts are angels and He is at the head of “10,000 x 10,000” of them.
 - B. This name is emphasized here when Israel is weak and they need to know that their God is the Lord of all the powers of heaven and earth.

4. A series of 8 visions that came to Zechariah in the night - 5 in today’s reading:
 - A. The first vision: Horses; the Lord of Hosts is “jealous” for Jerusalem and Zion.
 - B. The second vision: 4 horns and 4 “craftsmen” (workmen)
 - 1) The 4 horns were the nations that had come against Israel, Judah and Jerusalem.
 - 2) The number 4 represents the 4 directions from which trouble came down on the people of God.
 - 3) The “craftsmen” were the powers that had overthrown Assyria and Babylon.
 - C. The third vision: A man with a measuring line (as in Ezekiel and Revelation)
 - 1) Jerusalem will become too full of Jews and Gentiles to be contained in a wall.
 - 2) One day, the Lord Himself will be Jerusalem’s wall of fire.
 - 3) These prophecies will not be fulfilled completely until the millennial age.
 - 4) God’s plan is inclusive.
 - a) God’s short-range plan is to judge the nations around Judah.
 - b) God’s ultimate plan is to include those nations in the blessing that will come when He Himself comes to live among His people again in Jerusalem.
 - c) “The apple of his eye”- rooted in Deuteronomy and repeated in Zechariah 2
 - D. The fourth vision:
 - 1) It mentions Satan by name. He is the accuser (as in Revelation 12:10). Jesus is our defense attorney (1 John 2:1-2).
 - 2) The High Priest Joshua stands before the throne of God and an angel replaces his filthy rags with clean robes. (Our own condition and standing before God)
 - 3) Joshua and his priests are symbols of things to come, when in a single day, the sins of the world will be just not covered, but removed. That happened on Calvary.
 - E. The fifth vision: The Golden Lampstand and the 2 Olive Trees
 - 1) Similar, but not identical to John’s vision on Patmos
 - 2) The olive trees represent the 2 who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth.
 - 3) The battle cry they are given is: “Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord.”
 - 4) Oil is seen as a symbol of the Holy Spirit continually in the NT. It is rooted in this OT passage.

1. The sixth vision: The flying scroll...it was a huge scroll, on one side of which there is a curse banishing every thief and on the other side a curse against everyone who swears falsely.

2. The seventh vision: The woman in the basket, the personification of wickedness
 - A. She is trying to get out of the basket.
 - B. 2 angels carry the container from Jerusalem to Babylon (always identified with evil).

3. Visions 6 and 7, taken together, assure Zechariah that God will deal with the problem of wickedness in the land. Visions 1, 2, and 3 deal with the fear of their security and the leaders are encouraged for the task. Visions 4 and 5 assure them that they are up to the task - "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord." God will do the work.

4. The eighth vision:
 - A. The 4 horses: red, black, white, and dappled
 - B. The clear thing about this is that the earth belongs to the Lord and He is in control.

5. Joshua is a type of Christ. The crown is for him as he functions as priest and king. Melchizedek was priest and king. Jesus was prophet, priest and king.

6. Chapters 7 and 8 are tied together by the questions from the elders of Bethel regarding fasting. (Bethel may have been a man and not a town (Bethel-Sharezzer):
 - A. The fasts commemorated the fall of Jerusalem - the Jews (and perhaps Persian proselytes) wanted to know if the number of these fasts can be reduced.
 - B. Answer from the Lord: The fast days are to be turned into feast days.
 - C. There are appropriate times for fasting and appropriate times for feasting.

7. 4 precepts to sum up the social standards of Israel's life (and they should sum up ours):
 - A. Render true judgments.
 - B. Show mercy and compassion to one another.
 - C. Do not oppress the widow, fatherless or alien.
 - D. Do not think evil of one another.

8. The jealousy of God:
 - A. God maintains a "holy jealousy" for His people and the city that bears His name.
 - B. He is passionate about defending the holiness, purity, and integrity of His name, His people, and His city.
 - C. The result of this jealousy for His people and His city: "In those days 10 men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the edge of His robe and say: 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

1. Zechariah 9:9 - "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."
 - A. Matthew and John use this verse when speaking about Palm Sunday.
 - B. Jesus saw these words as pointing to Himself. That is why He chose to enter Jerusalem that way.
 - C. The people of Jerusalem made the connection when they saw Jesus entering Jerusalem that way.
2. The verses that follow do not fit His first coming but His second coming - prophecies looking at different periods of time but lumped together.
3. Zechariah 11:12 - "They paid me 30 pieces of silver, and the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'." Matthew applied these words to Judas' betrayal. He was paid 30 pieces of silver. After Jesus' death he returned the money, and the priests and scribes bought a potter's field with it. Matthew attributes it to Jeremiah - perhaps they were on the same scroll, but we just don't know.
4. The lists of the nations to be judged: some were significant powers well before the time of the exile and others after the exile. It may be a representative list. They are subdued as the Lord sweeps down from the north - usually Israel's enemies were sweeping down from the north.
5. Zechariah 10:4 - "From Judah will come the cornerstone..." - also a Messianic reference and another description of the millennial kingdom: Ephraim and Judah being reunited; Jews returning from exile in distant lands; children at rest.
6. Zechariah 10:3 - God is angry with the shepherds of Israel.
7. Chapter 11 - This all parallels the ministry of Christ:
 - A. There is a shepherd who represents the Lord who has 2 staffs called Favor and Unity.
 - B. The flock rejects the shepherd so he leaves the flock to its fate.
 - C. He breaks the 2 staffs, revoking a covenant (Favor) and breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (Unity).
8. Chapter 11 - The 3 shepherds who are removed in a month defy identification and are hard to fit into this or any other interpretation. Zechariah 11 is a "most difficult" chapter of the Bible.