

1. "On that day" - used 16 times - the Battle of Armageddon
 - A. Zechariah 12:10ff and Revelation 1:7ff - All will see the one they have pierced.
 - B. Zechariah 13:7, Mark 14:27 and John 10:14 - Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the sheep will scatter when He is arrested.
 - C. Zechariah 14 and Acts 1 - Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives and will return there at His second coming.
 - 1) When He returns, Jerusalem will be in great danger.
 - 2) He will come to defend her and establish His Kingdom.
 - a) There will be perpetual light.
 - b) Living water will flow from Jerusalem. (Ezekiel says from the Temple.)
2. The fate of the armies that fight against the Lord:
 - A. A plague will strike the armies and their animals.
 - B. The conflict will not last very long.
 - C. The attackers will become worshippers.
3. Zechariah's book ends with "Holy to the Lord" being inscribed even on the cooking pots - everything will be sacred.
4. Having read what the Old Testament has to say about the end times will help us when we get to the New Testament Book of Revelation.
5. The messages delivered by the exilic and post-exilic prophets concerning the end times:
 - A. A physical return of the nation of Israel to its homeland.
 - B. The nations will be stirred up against God's people.
 - C. They will conquer Jerusalem for a time under the leadership of a mighty deceiver.
 - D. The Lord will come to the Mount of Olives and defeat His enemies.
 - E. He will establish His kingdom on earth.
6. God had not abandoned His people - they had a future. It was the encouragement they needed to go on building the Temple, which was finished, Zechariah and Haggai giving them the impetus to do so.

1. Psalm 146 - Psalm 149 were written by Zechariah and Haggai.
2. The post-exilic setting of these Psalms:
 - A. Psalm 146 - "Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save..."
 - 1) Work came to a halt on the temple when Cyrus, their benefactor, died.
 - 2) Their trust had to be in the Lord who "...lifts up those who are bowed down..."
 - B. Psalm 147 - "...He gathers the exiles of Israel...helps the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."
 - C. Psalm 149 - The people expected that God would now judge those who had oppressed them.
4. Reasons for the children of Israel to praise God:
 - A. Psalm 146 - The God of Jacob is the help of Israel. He remains faithful forever.
 - 1) He upholds the cause of the oppressed and feeds the hungry.
 - 2) He sets prisoners free and gives sight to the blind.
 - 3) He lifts up those bowed down, watches over the alien, and protects widows and the fatherless.
 - B. Psalm 147 and 148 - He is the Creator and Ruler of all nature.
 - 1) He named and numbered the stars.
 - 2) He governs nature.
 - 3) He created and rules all of animate creation.
 - C. He has revealed to us His laws and decrees, through the nation of Israel. He revealed Himself to all mankind in His creation.
 - D. Who should praise God?
 - 1) Israel - and all of His saints
 - 2) Angels
 - 3) Sun, moon and stars
 - 4) All animate creation
 - 5) Psalm 150: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"
 - E. How should we praise God?
 - 1) Singing
 - 2) Musical instruments: trumpets, harps, lyres, tambourines, strings, flutes, cymbals
 - 3) Dance

1. Back to Ezra and the 3-stage return of the exiles to Jerusalem
 - A. First stage - Zerubbabel and Joshua, Haggai and Zechariah - the Temple is rebuilt.
 - B. Ezra 7 and 8 - 60 years later
 - 1) Ezra gains permission from King Artaxerxes to take a 2nd group back (c. 457 BC).
 - 2) The journey took 4 months - 1754 people
2. "The good hand of His God was on him" - this phrase occurs 5 times. Because of this:
 - A. Ezra received what he asked for from the king.
 - B. The journey of 900 miles took only 4 months.
 - C. He was able to convince the leaders of Israel to go with him.
 - D. He was able to recruit the Levites to go (none of whom had volunteered).
 - E. He traveled safely without a contingent of troops, telling the king God would provide security for His people.
3. Ezra understood what James would later write: "Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father on high." (James 1: 17)
4. Ezra had a distinguished bloodline: It went back to Aaron, to his son Eleazar, down to Zadok, the faithful priest who served David and Solomon.
5. Ezra was also a scribe or a teacher. (Soper is the word for scribe - interesting aside!)
6. End of chapter 7 - Ezra switches from the 3rd to the 1st person in his telling of this history.
7. They carried with them a treasure of nearly 25 tons of silver, 7500 pounds of gold and 7500 pounds of silver articles, and they trusted God to protect them. Some of the treasure came from the Jews remaining in Persia, and some from King Artaxerxes, known for being wealthy and generous.
8. They prayed and fasted before they went, and separated the treasure into portions, which various individuals were responsible to get back to Jerusalem. Nothing went missing.
9. Artaxerxes letter was written in Aramaic and recorded for us in that language in the Book of Ezra.
10. The exiles called themselves Israelites now, not Judeans. Ezra and Nehemiah use "Israel" 24 times (as opposed to "Judah", which occurs only 4 times).
11. Artaxerxes has '7 advisers;' his father Xerxes had '7 princes' who had special access to him.
12. Ezra was the guardian of the Law of Moses - he was to teach it and administer it.
13. Codification of the laws of other nations was something the kings of Persia did. As Ezra was commissioned with promulgating the Law of Moses, so Darius I ordered the ancient laws of Egypt to be codified, a task that took 15 years.

1. Ezra's first act upon arrival in Jerusalem is to offer sacrifices to the Lord.
2. The leaders of the people brought a problem to Ezra: intermarriage between the men of Israel and the women of the neighboring peoples.
 - A. Ezra reacts with urgency and his reaction is extreme - he is appalled.
 - B. Ezra prays and asks God for forgiveness and this produces a movement of repentance among the people.
 - C. God is NOT a racist; He also is NOT a pluralist when it comes to worship and religion. It was not a matter of the women they had married being Gentiles - it was a matter of them still worshipping idols and teaching the children to be idolaters.
 - D. We are not to marry unbelievers - it is a common and devastating mistake.
 - E. The decision to put away the unbelieving spouse was harsh. They had put themselves in an impossible situation by consciously disobeying God and setting themselves up for judgment again.
3. Ezra's prayer:
 - A. The incarnational factor - "Forgive us" - a painful and powerful strategy for intercessory prayer.
 - B. He prayed fervently, with fasting, and persistently, and this moved the people around him to pray and repent.
4. Change must start with the leaders - of a church, a family, or a society. Whatever needs to be done must first be modeled by the leadership.
5. Ezra actually names, in Scripture, the men who married the unbelieving women.
6. Impressions from the Book of Ezra:
 - A. "The good hand of God was upon him" - God's providential dealings with His people.
 - B. Zerubbabel, Joshua, Haggai, Zechariah and Ezra - people essential to the re-establishment of the people in Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple.
 - C. Satan always opposes the work of God - either externally, or if that fails, internally.
 - 1) He did it with Balak and Balaam - cursing did not work, but seduction did.
 - 2) He did it again here in Ezra.
 - 3) He does it with us - the NT says that these things are written for our instruction.

1. Nehemiah picks up with Stage 3 of the return of the exiles.
 - A. Stage 1 - Zerubbabel and Joshua in 537 BC; rebuilt altar and foundation of the Temple; opposition stopped the work; preaching of Haggai starts the work up again; finished 516 BC
 - B. Stage 2 - Ezra in 458 BC - concern for moral purity - change of heart in the people
 - C. Stage 3 - Nehemiah - 445 BC - charged with rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem

2. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes - a well-trusted servant with daily access to the king.
 - 1) He was the wine taster (so the king would not be poisoned).
 - 2) He was a personal confidant, sometimes even an adviser, of the king.
 - 3) He was not allowed to ever be sad in the presence of the king - by edict. This is the reason Nehemiah carried his burden for 4 months before speaking to the king.

3. Comparisons between Daniel and Nehemiah:
 - A. Both were exiles who rose to tremendous heights in the civil service of a pagan empire.
 - B. Both were true to God in environments hostile to men of faith.
 - C. Both relied on prayer.

4. Nehemiah's prayers:
 - A. Prayers of petition and remorse - prayed in the 1st person for his people
 - B. "Bullet" prayers - the quick "God help me now" sort of prayer (when the king wants to know why he is sad - in his presence, no less!)
 - C. The "bullet" prayer had been preceded by 4 months of prayer and fasting.

5. It is still possible for men and women of faith to keep their integrity and be in government or politics - it is no more difficult today than it was for Nehemiah. God calls Christians into every sphere of human activity to represent Him.

6. People named in today's reading and mentioned in other historical documents:
 - A. Hanani, Nehemiah's brother - also mentioned in the Elephantine Papyri as Governor of Jerusalem
 - B. Sanballat - mentioned in the above papyri as Governor of Samaria - tried to stop the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem
 - C. Geshem the Arab - mentioned in extra-biblical documents and on silver articles - in charge of the powerful north Arabian confederacy
 - D. This has "apologetic" value for us as we defend the Bible's reliability.

7. King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah's request because "the gracious hand of my God was upon me." (The same thing Ezra said over and over again.)

8. The Greek "pardes" means "beyond the wall", referring to an enclosure or a park - in the period between the Old and New Testaments, it became the word "paradise", referring to the place of the righteous dead.

9. Nehemiah 3 is a "treasure trove" of information for archaeologists and those concerned with the dimensions of ancient Jerusalem.

10. The walls had 10 gates and enclosed between 90 and 220 acres of land. Nehemiah delegated to different groups and families the responsibility of rebuilding a section of the wall.