

# Ezra

Ezra 1:1-10:44

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-06-09

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## Introduction - How does Ezra fit with Nehemiah and Esther

We have come to the last three historical books of the Old Testament, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. And I don't believe you can properly interpret any one of those three without the other two. They are interwoven with each other and provide the interpretive framework for each other. And they are also tightly interwoven with the three post-exilic prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. And those all occur during the same general time period.

Now, I will tell you upfront that not all believe that. In fact, everything I will be sharing with you today is the minority position. Thankfully, Creation Ministries International and other organizations have been writing amazingly good studies defending the Biblical chronology, but it is not the establishment view even within evangelical circles. And I think it is important that you know this so that you aren't confused when you read your study bibles. You won't find this in the NIV Study Bible, the New Geneva Study Bible, the Reformation Study Bible. And I will deal with that controversy in a bit. But almost all Biblical Chronologists over the last several hundred years would take issue with the current establishment position.

You might wonder why I don't take Ezra and Nehemiah together as one book like many study bibles do. I have numerous reasons for seeing them as two books written by two different authors.

I won't get into those technical details this morning. But for those of you who have done a bit of reading, I will admit that Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah were grouped together in a couple of ancient Hebrew manuscripts. But that doesn't prove that Ezra and Nehemiah are one book. It proves too much. It would prove that Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah were one book, and we saw that cannot be possible with the ending of Chronicles and the beginning of Ezra. Connected, yes, but not one book.

And I will admit that Dorsey tries to tie the books together via a very forced chiasm but I will put onto the web the obvious reasons why that simply does not work.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

But to me the most obvious reason is that for this theory to work, they have to claim that Nehemiah did not write the book of Nehemiah. But if you look at Nehemiah 1:1, you will see that it is quite clear that Nehemiah wrote every word of Nehemiah. It says, “The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.” And he keeps talking in the first person singular - “I...my...I...me...I...I...I.” And it is the same “I” and “me” that is writing every verse in every chapter through to the end of the book, with the only exception being chapter 11, where the whole chapter is nothing but a list of names. So Ezra was written by Ezra and Nehemiah was written by Nehemiah. They are quite different books with different structures and different writing styles. Yet God in His marvelous providence was guiding both prophets in their writing in order to complement each other.

And speaking of God’s guidance of both prophets, I do want to comment on something very troubling in the Bible Project video for this book. Though the Bible Project videos are very helpful introductions on quite a number of the books of the Bible, the video on Ezra and Nehemiah is very bad in both its theology and literary analysis. I think that video also slanders both Ezra and Nehemiah and completely misunderstands the purpose for these books. So for those of you who like to watch those videos ahead of time, I’m giving you a heads up warning on that. It’s not helpful.

But having said that, there are some similarities between the two books. An emperor authorizes the building of the temple in Ezra and an emperor authorizes the building of the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah. Then this decree is followed by a time of opposition from God’s enemies in both of the books. And then each book has a formal covenant renewal after the completion of the project. Each book is concerned with holiness, with Ezra being concerned with holiness in God’s sanctuary and Nehemiah being concerned with holiness in society. And you would expect these similarities given that both books are covering approximately the same time period - at least, if you hold to the older views on these books that I do, and not the establishment view.

But if you start reading establishment commentaries by evangelicals you will become quite confused because a majority of them insist that there were two scribes by the name of Ezra and two governors by the name of Nehemiah, and two leaders by the name of Mordecai, and these three pairs

of leaders were separated from each other by 91 years. According to them, they just “happen” to have the same names, but they are not the same people. I know, it sounds bizarre, but I’ll tell you in a bit why they feel forced to say this. And I’m giving you this background information because what should be a fairly straightforward read of Ezra and Nehemiah becomes and incredibly complicated, convoluted, and confusing read if you follow the establishment views. I hate to have to go through controversies, but I think it is the only way of clearing up the mess. And if you don’t get this right it hugely affects your view of five other books - Nehemiah, Esther, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

My view is that Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are tightly linked together and help to explain why the post-exilic prophets even wrote their messages. For example, take a look at Ezra 2:2. It tells us the names of the leaders who brought the very first group of Jews from Babylon to Israel. It says,

Those who came with Zerubbabel were Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

And then it goes on to give a bunch of other names that also appear in Nehemiah 7, Nehemiah 10, and Nehemiah 12. Verse 2 gives major heartburn to the establishment people, while it makes perfect sense to me and to other Biblical chronologists. You see, in verse 2 we are immediately introduced to the big players in the three books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Zerubbabel was the governor of Israel in the first year of Cyrus, and that connects this book tightly to Haggai and Zechariah, both of whom talk about Zerubbabel a great deal. The next name, Jeshua was the high priest, and Haggai 1:1 talks about him, as does Zechariah 3. He is a type of Jesus, and also has the Hebrew spelling for the name, Jesus - Yeshua. Also notice the names Nehemiah and Mordecai in verse 2.

Chronologists who start with the Bible as the only infallible chronology have absolutely no problem in concluding that this is the same Nehemiah who wrote the book of Nehemiah, and this is the same Mordecai who wrote the book of Esther. They are contemporaries of each other and these books help to interpret each other. Nehemiah 12:1-7 also insists that Ezra made his first trip to Jerusalem in that year. And by the way, verse 2 mentions Seraiah - that’s Ezra’s father, according to chapter 7:1. So even this verse knits these books together and implies a very short chronology.

But on the establishment view that is not the case. They separate the two books by 91 years. Likewise, the long list of names in chapter 2 are said by them to be separated by 91 years from the identical names in Nehemiah 10,

and since Nehemiah 7 and Nehemiah 12 give the list again and says that they came up with Zerubbabel, they have to place 91 years between Nehemiah 10 and the other two chapters. You would never have guessed that that would be the case if you weren't imposing a secular chronology on the story.

But here is the problem for even the establishment position - since a 91 year gap makes for impossibly old ages (once you get to Nehemiah 10) for 20 of the 30 leaders listed in Ezra 2, many establishment evangelicals claim that they must be family names rather than names of individual leaders. The trouble is, Nehemiah 10:1 makes it crystal clear that they are individuals. It says of those names, "Now those who placed their seal on the documents were [boy, that sure sounds like real individuals who are going to individually stamp a document, doesn't it?]: Nehemiah the governor..." Was he an individual? Yes. And then comes a list of names that includes many of the names on the Ezra 2 list, and each one placed his seal on the list.

And there are establishment evangelicals who thankfully are troubled by that. They recognize that it is a rather artificial solution that is torturing the text. So they have come up with two alternative theories to try to maintain their long secular chronology and maintain some semblance of an evangelical view of the Scripture. As I have already mentioned, the dominant theory is that there are two scribes with the name of Ezra and two governors with the name of Nehemiah. One pair were present under Cyrus and Darius and the other pair were present almost a century later under Artaxerxes Longimanus. And by the way, the English name Darius can be pronounced Dare-ee-us, Dahr-ee-us, or Der\_eye-us. The Hebrew doesn't sound like any of those. It is Dar-yah-esh. So for those of you who are purists, sorry, there is no purist pronunciation. You can use any of those three. I've checked out all of the standard pronunciation sites. So that's the first solution - two Ezras and two Nehemiahs.

Another solution some have come up with is to make Ezra 121 years old when he made his four month long trip of 800 miles on foot from Babylon to Jerusalem and 134 years old in Nehemiah 8:1 where he seems to be able to outwork the people. The actual figure should be 129 years old,<sup>2</sup> but we will

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2 Here is the logic showing that Ezra would be a minimum of 129 years old, not just 120. 1) Ezra's father was Seraiah, the last high priest of Solomon's temple (Ezra 7:1). 2) Seraiah died in 586 BC in Nebuchadnezzar's 19th year (see 2 Kings 25:8-21 with 1 Chron. 6:3-15). 3) To be generous, we will calculate that Ezra was 1 year old when his father died. 4) The Artaxerxes in question had to have a reign longer than 32 years (see Nehemiah 13:6). Darius 1 (Hystaspes) ruled 36 years (521-485). Artaxerxes I Longimanus ruled 41 years (464-424). Artaxerxes II Memnon ruled 46 years (404-558). 5) Simple math shows that during the seventh year of the king Ezra would be 72 if the king were Darius

go with their lower figure. Now the problem they didn't notice is that later in Nehemiah 11, Ezra's father is present. I would assume that his father would be older than him, yet Ezra is at least 134 years old. And they also have to make Nehemiah 143 years old. And they say that God somehow gave them both the strength to make that long trip. But given their travels back and forth between Babylon and Jerusalem, that seems extremely unlikely. That's why the majority of Evangelical scholars have opted for the double Ezra-Nehemiah theory. To them it seems easier to believe that strange coincidence than to believe that Ezra and Nehemiah could be that old. Well, there's no need for the age or the double Nehemiah theory.

But I will admit that if two people's ages were the only problem, and if we were driven to reconcile this with secular chronology, we would just say, "Perhaps God did a miracle." But there are a number of other problems. The first and most obvious problem is that Nehemiah 8:17 says, "So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths..." Ooops! So its not just Nehemiah, Ezra, and his dad who have unusually old ages. The whole assembly does, (that is, if the establishment is correct that Nehemiah 8 occurs 91 years later). In fact, some of those people were old at the beginning of Cyrus' reign. And yet the text says, "those who had returned from the captivity..." Not their children, but those who had returned. Floyd Nolan Jones points out the problem. He says, "Such would be meaningless if 91 years had elapsed since Ezra 3:4 as nearly all the returnees would surely have died during the interim." (p. 259) He comes up with his own very intriguing solution. I don't buy into it, but it is worth reading. It's the only other explanation that I have read that takes the Scripture and secular chronology seriously.

Here are some other problems. On the establishment view people are forced to take chapters in Ezra as being out of order - hugely out of order - jumping back and forth by an entire lifetime with no explanation. So on their interpretation Ezra appears to be an incredibly sloppy writer. They are forced to put gaps in the genealogies, even though Ezra insisted on complete genealogies.

Here's another problem. Look at verse 1. It says, "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying..." Ezra claims that this decree of Cyrus was the fulfillment

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(514), 129 if the king was Longimanus (457), and 189 if the king was Memnon (397).

of Jeremiah's prophecy, and all evangelicals agree that the prophecy being referred to is found in Jeremiah 25:11-12, and repeated in Jeremiah 29:10.

Well, here's the problem. There aren't enough years between those two events on an establishment view. Jeremiah 25:11-12 stated that from the time Jerusalem was laid waste until Israel returned to the land would be 70 years. That's from the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem. The trouble is, on an establishment view, the time from Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the city till Cyrus' first year is only 50 years. One of my professors said that 70 was a rounded number or an ideal number, not a literal number. But why do you need to round 50 up to 70? The New Geneva Study Bible says on this verse, "This period may be counted in round numbers..." But let me give you several reasons why this has to be a very precise number.

First, in Zechariah 7:5, the prophet told the post-exilic people "When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years..." He is clearly referring to actual historical years as being an already accomplished fact, and he dates the seventy years as beginning from the burning of the temple in the fifth month (2 Kings 25:8,9; Jer. 52:12) and the murdering of Gedaliah in the seventh month (2 Kings 25:25; Jer. 41:1). The NIV study Bible says, "the 70 years here are to be reckoned from 586 B.C." Problem - 586-536 is 50 years. 50 years is 20 years shy of 70. There is something messed up with the establishment dates. That's the point.

Second, 2 Chronicles 36:21 says that there would be one year in exile for every sabbath year that Israel did not let the land lie fallow - seventy years. That's not a round number - that counts every year.

Third, when Jeremiah repeats his prophecy in Jeremiah 29:10 he says, "After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place." Not rounded, but completed.

Fourth, Daniel 9:2 says, "in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." He is doing calculations and he realizes that the 70 years is up. And that got him praying about the restoration of the city and temple, and God sent His angel to say that the command went forth to rebuild as soon as Daniel had started praying. Daniel had calculated the number of years, and there is no way he could calculate that it was time for those 70 years to be fulfilled if it was a general round number.

On the interpretation of virtually every Biblical chronologists of every stripe, it is exactly 70 years. On the establishment evangelical position it is not - no matter where they start it from. And the reason it is not is that they have accepted one secular chronology as the standard and are force-fitting everything into that secular chronology. And it creates numerous other problems.<sup>3</sup>

So why do evangelicals do this? If you were a cynic, you might say that it is a lust for academic respectability. And maybe with some it is. With most, they just start with the presupposition that the dates of Ptolemy are correct and they try to reconcile everything with that presupposition. I think they are sincere, but this presupposition hinders them from seeing God's intention. But it is not as if they haven't had constant warnings. Even Sir Isaac Newton warned that Ptolemy was inaccurate. Many other scholars have as well. But it is such an enormous job to overthrow the establishment that most don't try. You can see that I have even given you the establishment dates in your outline.

So who is this Ptolemy? Claudius Ptolomy was a second century AD astronomer who pulled together previous lists of kings, and using mathematical calculations of solar and lunar eclipses tried to establish a date for each Babylonian and Persian king. He was a pretty smart dude. And his calculations have been a standard for computing chronologies for a long time. It's the only secular record we have that connects the period of the Babylonians and Persians with the rest of history. The problem is, it seems to

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3 Just as one example: They mess up the timing of when the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 begins. Daniel realized that the 70 years of exile were up, so he prays, and God immediately answered his prayers, with a messenger angel telling him, "At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision" and then he speaks of the first seven weeks of the 70 weeks of years starting the moment the command went forth. When did the command go forth? Right while Daniel was praying. You can't have a gap in the start of those 70 weeks. They have to start right away. During that seven weeks (which equals 49 years), the angel told Daniel this would happen:

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem ... there shall be seven weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. That fits our interpretation of Ezra and Nehemiah to a "t," but doesn't fit the 82 year gap of the establishment at all. On their view it is another 82 years after Daniel's prayer before the countdown starts. They have to fudge the 70 years and fudge the weeks and come up with another 82 year gap out of thin air. But on our interpretation, it's perfect. On the back side of the outline I have given you a chart from the first year of Cyrus till the 32nd year of Darius, when the city and walls were finished in the book of Nehemiah. If you add up the total years of Cyrus, Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and up to the 32nd year of Darius Hystaspis, you come to exactly 49 years. And if NASA's demonstration of what they call fraudulent history on the part of Ptolemy is true, then the puzzle of the 490 years is also solved. There is a non-stop countdown to the baptism of Jesus without a break or gap. And I won't get into the pros and the cons of that. I'm just point out that these and many other problems make it absolutely impossible for me to believe the establishment view and have caused me to embrace the older views of Biblical chronologists.

contradict Biblical dates and it also contradicts virtually every other ancient chronology.

Thankfully, the era of Ptolemy's dominance may be nearing its end because of a NASA study, of all things!! In 1978, NASA astronomer Robert Newton demonstrated that some of the eclipses that Ptolemy put on paper absolutely could not have been observed anywhere in Babylon, which means that Ptolemy fabricated them, which in turn means that his calculations could be off by up to a century.<sup>4</sup> But that NASA study is so inconvenient, that you are likely not to see changes in textbooks, Study Bibles, or other places for some decades. That's the way it is - textbooks take decades to catch up with the evidence. But I just want you to be aware that there is a great deal of controversy on the dating of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. And there is solid Biblical evidence (as well as some secular evidence) for the views of evangelical Biblical chronologists that I will be presenting as we go through the book.<sup>5</sup>

One of the things that these faithful biblical scholars have shown is the absolutely precise way that the titles for Darius change from merely Darius the king, to Ahasuerus, and then to Artaxerxes. He was not given that last title till later in his reign after he conquered the Greeks and was acknowledged by them to be their Artaxerxes - that's a Greek spelling. And the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther use the appropriate titles for each of three stages in his rule. OK, enough background.

### **A. Key word = temple (*bayit* = 57x; *heykal* = 3x)**

The key word in this book is clearly the temple. It was a central focus to Ezra's book of Chronicles and it is a central focus to this one too, occurring 60 times. This would be the temple or house of God that the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon at Pentecost and out of whose doors would go living waters to the ends of the earth. Ezra built it according to the precise directions given by Ezekiel the prophet in Ezekiel 40-46. That's a controversial topic too, but he did. The setting up of the temple was a very significant event in redemptive history.

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4 For a brief intro, see Robert R. Newton, "The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy," *Scientific American*, October 1977, pp. 79-81. For his book length study, see Robert R. Newton, *The Crime of Claudius Ptolemy*, (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Uni. Press, 1977).

5 For three interesting and non-technical essays on the subject, see David Austin's at <https://creation.com/darius-is-artaxerxes> Also see James Jordan's four part series starting here: <https://theopolisinstitute.com/article/the-chronology-of-ezra-nehemiah-part-1/> Also Kenneth Charles Griffith <http://www.church-of-yehovah.org/chronoezra.htm>

## **II. Central theme = Reformation of the church**

And this word “temple” fits in with the central theme of the book - the reformation of the church. Where Nehemiah will deal with holiness in the society, Ezra deals with holiness in the church. Ezra will seek to bring the church back to the law of God. And he will be successful.

## **III. Key phrase: “Trembled at the words of the God of Israel” (Ezra 9:4; also see 10:3)**

And I think one of the key phrases for understanding the book is the phrase repeated in Ezra 9:4 and 10:3. It speaks of those who “trembled at the words of the God of Israel.” It is the fear of God that is the heart of reformation, and Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all lament the lack of this fear of God in some of the people. When God sent reformation to the church, they feared Him and trembled at His Word.

## **IV. Key verse: Ezra 7:10**

And Elder Duff said that the key verse that I’ve given in your outlines is one of the Navigators’ favorites. Ezra 7:10 says, “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” Pastor Duff said that he has heard a number of Navigator sermons on that text. A marvelous text.

## **V. Christ of Ezra**

### **A. *Zerubbabel***

The Christ of Ezra can be seen in the temple, altar, burnt offerings, and other sacrifices. It can also be seen in the festivals of Tabernacles and of Passover, which we have examined before.

But the image of Jesus that stands out is Zerubbabel, the prince of Israel. He was the grandson of Jehoiachin, who had been released from prison, and is listed in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. And so, the Davidic covenant has not ended. He may not be a king, but he stands as a much better symbol of Christ’s kingship than previous kings did.

Zerubbabel was like a second Moses, bringing Israel out of captivity and to the promised land. Zechariah had proclaimed that Zerubbabel would lay low the mountains (Zechariah 4:6-8) and Haggai had announced that he would vanquish kingdoms of this world. He was said to be a signet ring on God’s finger (Hag. 2:21-23). And one of his assignments was to do the impossible

task of rebuilding the temple in less than five years. That's almost a miraculous feat. And Haggai 2:6-9 uses that temple to point to a greater temple, Jesus. Jesus not only was the final temple who made the former temple obsolete, He was the final sacrifice that made all other sacrifices obsolete. Likewise, just as Zerubbabel chased away the wolves of false religionists in Ezra 4, Jesus casts out all impostors and is creating for Himself a beautiful temple and a bride without spot or wrinkle. So I would say that Zerubbabel is a very key image of Christ.

***B. temple, altar, burnt offerings, and other sacrifices (3:2-6; 6:9,17; 7:17; 8:35; 9:5,6; etc)***

***C. Feast of Tabernacles (3:1-6)***

***D. Passover (6:19-22)***

## **VI. Overview of the book**

Let me give you a panoramic overview of the book. We've already read verse 1, but let's read verses 1-3 again.

Ezra 1:1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying, 2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. 3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem. 4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem. That paragraph is absolutely loaded with theology and implications we can't get into. But it is also a remarkable fulfillment of prophecy. 1000 years before this was fulfilled, Leviticus 26 had predicted that God would exile His people and then bring them back to the land. Predicting exile you could understand, but bringing them back to the land? That is a remarkable prophesy. 170 years before this, Isaiah had not only predicted the return to Israel, but named Cyrus as the future deliverer and gave other detailed prophecies about Cyrus' miraculous coming to power. Seventy years earlier, Jeremiah had timed this deliverance down to the year.

I wish I had time to read the incredible prophecy of Isaiah 44:26-45:7. It shows God's sovereignty in naming Cyrus, raising him up to overthrow

Babylon, and giving miraculous victories. But let me at least read three verses.

26 Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, "You shall be inhabited," To the cities of Judah, "You shall be built," And I will raise up her waste places; 27 Who says to the deep, "Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers"; 28 Who says of Cyrus, "He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' "

Keep those three verses in mind when Dispensationalists claim that Cyrus did not make a decree to rebuild Jerusalem. They try to claim that only Artaxerxes Longimanus ordered the rebuilding of Jerusalem. But the inspired text says about Cyrus: "Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built, and I will raise up her waste places.'" By the way, Josephus quotes more details from Cyrus' actual decree and there is an explicit reference to rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The dispensations claim that the decree does not come for almost another century is bogus.

So Ezra 2:1-3 is the fulfillment of astounding prophecies. And the fact that Cyrus made a decree for both the temple and Jerusalem to be built also knits the timetable of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah together. There are so many indicators like this that knit these books together.

Chapter 1 then details a ton of temple furniture that was being brought back. Nebuchadnezzar had taken it out of the temple, and now it was being brought back. Chapter 2 then outlines the names of those who returned. There were only 42,000 named out of hundreds of thousands. Why did not more return? Esther and the minor prophets tell us - they cared more about their own comforts than about the house of God. They put personal comforts ahead of the kingdom. Nothing is new under the sun.

When they arrived, chapter 3 shows that the very first thing that they did was to build an altar at the temple site to begin offerings. They loved the Gospel of Jesus Christ that was displayed in that sacrificial system. Chapter 3:2-7 indicates that they never let the fires of the altar go out - there were perpetual sacrifices reminding the community continually of the grace of God. It's a marvelous section on the Gospel.

Chapter 3 ends with the finishing of the foundation and the joyous celebration they had at the laying of the foundation for that temple. It was an event worth celebrating. Let me read chapter 10, verses 10-11.

Ezra 3:10 When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang

responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel.” Then all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

But I want you to notice something sad in verses 12-13:

Ezra 3:12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers’ houses, old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this temple was laid before their eyes. Yet many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the sound was heard afar off.

Verse 12 said that there were “old men” there who remembered Solomon’s temple, and they wept. Later we discover that these old codgers put discouragement into the hearts of everyone by saying that this was not going to be as good as Solomon’s temple. They were pouring cold water on the project. This is the first of numerous things that would arise to discourage the hearts of the workers in Ezra and Nehemiah. And they had to strengthen their hearts to not allow the wind to be taken out of their sails. It’s easy for any of us to give up when others discourage us. And the next chapters show us how not to.

Chapter 4 and following had far bigger discouragements. The enemies of these Jews tried every trick up their sleeve to put an end to the building of the temple. Why would they care? Some people try to give political reasons for them opposing the temple, and there may have been a threat to them politically. But I chalk it up to the fact that they were sons of the devil, and Jesus said that Satan can use his children any time he wants to in order to discourage and to oppose God’s people. That’s why Paul said that we need to recognize that we are not fighting against flesh and blood. This hostility was predicted all the way back in Genesis 3:15 when God predicted that the seed of Satan (that’s unbelievers) would always be at enmity with the seed of the woman (that’s the church). Don’t be surprised when the world hates you. In fact, be surprised if it doesn’t hate you. Look at Ezra 4, beginning to read at verse 1.

Ezra 4:1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin [keep in mind that though they will give a sweet offer, they are adversaries or enemies - when they] heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of Israel, 2 they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers’ houses, and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here.” 3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers’ houses of Israel said to them, “You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.” 4 Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, 5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Their first strategy was to infiltrate, and what better way to infiltrate than to offer to help; to offer to join them? The Bible Project video makes Ezra out to be violating God's purposes of reaching the Gentiles in refusing their help. They paint Ezra as being mean-spirited. Nothing could be further from the truth. God Himself says that they were enemies in verse 1 - even before the sweet offer. From later chapters we know that the hearts of these adversaries already had hatred and they certainly were not interested in the pure worship of God. 2 Kings 17:33 describes that same group of people and says that they feared Yehowah but served their own gods. They were syncretists, and their intent was a demonic attempt to compromise the worship of Israel. Both Ezra and Nehemiah record Satan's attempts to plant false sons to cause trouble. And when that was not possible, they aggressively pursued other means, including legal challenges.

Let me introduce you to a riddle that has puzzled people for a long time. I'll give you my view of the verse first. Verse 5 summarizes all the opposition as coming between the reigns of Cyrus and Darius; not after, but between. A straightforward reading of that would indicate that the opposition ended during the reign of Darius. And then he goes back in verse 6 to outline where each of the oppositions came from between those two reigns. There were two kings between those two reigns.

In contrast, the establishment people say that Ahasuerus in verse 6 is Xerxes (the king after Darius) and the Artaxerxes in verse 7 is Artaxerxes Longimanus (the emperor after Xerxes). Then they are forced to say that verses 23-24 go backwards 64 years to Darius again. So they put it all out of sequence. The problem with that is that verse 23 starts with a Hebrew word that indicates forward sequence. There can be no going backwards. It is the Hebrew word *adayin* (אָדַיִן) which always indicates that the next thing comes after the previous thing. Darius can't come after Artaxerxes Longimanus, since everyone agrees that Longimanus is after Darius.

Persian Rulers	Secular Dates (now questioned)	# of years	Biblical Name/Title	Reference
Cyrus	536-529 BC	8.5 years	Cyrus as emperor	Ezra 1:1,2,7,8; 3:7
Cambyses	529-522 BC	8 years	Ahasuerus	Ezra 4:6
Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata)	522 BC	.58 years	Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:7
Darius the Great	521-486 BC	36 years	Darius Ahasuerus Artaxerxes	Ezra 4:1-6:15 Esther Ezra 6:14; 7:1ff

Totaling the years from Cyrus' first year when the decree went forth (536 BC) to the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius the Great when Nehemiah had finished the walls (see Neh. 13:6) gives a total of 49 years – the number of years God said it would take to rebuild Jerusalem and its walls (Daniel 9:25 – note seven weeks of years = 49 years).

So follow me here. Ezra has put an infallible guide in place to keep us from getting confused. Establishment people ignore this word *adayin*. Look at verse 24. It begins with a “Thus,” which is the exact same word, *adayin*, which means that verse 24 comes after verse 23. It should really be translated as “Then.” Now look at chapter 5:2. The first word “So” is that same word. It could be translated as “Then.” Then look at verse 4. The word “then” is the same word, translated correctly this time. Each event after one of these words has to happen after the previous verses. Then look at chapter 6:1. The “Then” is the same word. So chapter 6:1 is indicating that the history of Darius being given in chapter 6 occurs after the history of Darius that occurs in chapter 5. The same is true of verse 13.

But 6:15 says, “And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.” On our theory that makes perfect sense. There is forward progression. On the establishment theory there is jumping back and forth.

Then chapter 7 indicates that Ezra came up to beautify this newly built temple. When did he come up? Verse 8 indicates that it was the next year; it says that it is the seventh year of the king. If that king is Darius, that would make sense, since it would be within months of the temple's completion that Ezra comes up. But the establishment people say that this is Artaxerxes Longimanus, which means that Ezra made the trip 58 years after the temple was built. It makes no sense of the sequence, and it is hard to believe that Ezra made an 800 mile trip on foot when he was 120 years old, or that his father could accompany him. Floyd Nolan Jones has a respectable alternative. He says that this is Xerxes during his co-regency with Darius. I don't think he is correct, but I can respect his interpretation.

But if Chapter 7 is during the reign of Darius, and if Artaxerxes is Darius (as I. and numerous chronologists believe), what about that title, Artaxerxes? It's just that, a title. It's the difference between king and emperor, but it's not a name. And actually, the author had already clued us in to the meaning by chapter 6:14 that Darius was now going to be called Artaxerxes. And we will look at that in a bit. But why the change in titles? Because the author is using the appropriate titles for different periods in Darius' reign. When Darius was still a military commander on the field, he was Darius the king, a greater among several weaker kings. But when he had captured all the kings and had won 19 battles against his internal adversaries, he took the Old Persian emperor title of "Ahasuerus." Why? Because he is now an emperor. And once the Greek islands acknowledged his reign, he took the title of Artaxerxes, or Mighty Warrior, as a flag of honor. That's a Greek title. On this, a lot of us conservatives are agreed.

But if you go back to chapter 4:5-7, there is still an enigma for us conservatives. Let me read those verses. These are the strongest verses for the establishment view because it sure looks like it is talking about two kings after Darius.

Ezra 4:5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezra 4:6 In the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, they wrote an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

Ezra 4:7 In the days of Artaxerxes also, Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabel, and the rest of their companions wrote to Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the letter was written in Aramaic script, and translated into the Aramaic language.

The establishment view says that Ahasuerus is Xerxes and Artaxerxes is Artaxerxes Longimanus. But that seems to contradict verse 5 and certainly contradicts the sequence in later chapters. And so far, there are two plausible solutions that have been proposed. James Jordan, David Austin of Creation Ministries International, and several others have retranslated the Hebrew so that all three terms: "Darius king of Persia," "Ahasuerus," and "Artaxerxes" refer to the same person. He is a king, he then becomes an Ahasuerus, and he then becomes an Artaxerxes. That is definitely a legitimate translation in the Hebrew, and Darius definitely had all three titles at different stages of his reign.

But to me it just doesn't seem like that's what the text says. I think the older view is much more natural. It does not require any re-translation. The older view is that verses 6 and 7 outline the opposition that occurred between the reigns of the two kings mentioned in verse 5, namely Cyrus and Darius. That makes sense of the grammar, the flow of the passage, and the time sequence

indicators we have already looked at in chapters 5-7. So my view is that the Ahasuerus of verse 6 was the next ruler after Cyrus, namely, Cambyses, and the Artaxerxes in verse 7 is the next king, Pseudo-Smerdis, and then it makes sense that the next king mentioned in this same chapter is Darius. But either way you approach this, chapter 4:5 makes it clear that the opposition only lasted until the reign of Darius.

So let me walk you through my understanding. In chapter 4:6, the enemies of Israel lodged a complaint with Cambyses. Apparently that didn't go anywhere (and I've got good reasons for why it wouldn't go anywhere). But the enemies don't give up. The moment Smerdis takes over the empire by intrigue, these men petition him. Though Smerdis doesn't have a long reign (it was seven months), there is plenty of time to get the petition to him, for him to do a search in the archives, and for him to write back his response to stop the project. And Smerdis, who held to a different religion from Cyrus, would have been very motivated to stop this temple. And he felt no compulsion to keep the laws of the Medes and the Persians. His usurper-reign was a break in the Achaemenid Emperors.

I will only read verses 12-16 of the complaint to give a feel for the spiritual dynamics of the accusers.

Ezra 4:12 Let it be known to the king that the Jews who came up from you have come to us at Jerusalem, and are building the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing its walls and repairing the foundations. 13 Let it now be known to the king that, if this city is built and the walls completed, they will not pay tax, tribute, or custom, and the king's treasury will be diminished.

So first, they try to demonize the Jews. Then they make an appeal to economics. Next, they try to make themselves look like ultra loyal servants who are only looking for the king's welfare. In reality, they were leeches who wanted to keep their jobs. The complaint continues in verse 14:

14 Now because we receive support from the palace, it was not proper for us to see the king's dishonor; therefore we have sent and informed the king, 15 that search may be made in the book of the records of your fathers. And you will find in the book of the records and know that this city is a rebellious city, harmful to kings and provinces, and that they have incited sedition within the city in former times, for which cause this city was destroyed. 16 We inform the king that if this city is rebuilt and its walls are completed, the result will be that you will have no dominion beyond the River.

This was an attempt to provoke fear of losing power. And Smerdis definitely had fear of losing power. His power base was very tenuous. So probably four or five months into his reign, he writes back in verses 17-22.

Ezra 4:17 The king sent an answer: To Rehum the commander, to Shimshai the scribe, to the rest of their companions who dwell in Samaria, and to the remainder beyond the River: Peace, and so forth. 18 The letter which you sent to us has been clearly read before

me. 19 And I gave the command, and a search has been made, and it was found that this city in former times has revolted against kings, and rebellion and sedition have been fostered in it. 20 There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all the region beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them. 21 Now give the command to make these men cease, that this city may not be built until the command is given by me. 22 Take heed now that you do not fail to do this. Why should damage increase to the hurt of the kings?

So their perseverance in legal complaints eventually paid off. And God's enemies have sought to use slander, demonization, isolation, lawsuits, and fear tactics to oppose consistent Christians all through history. Sometime you ought to read all of the lawsuits that the ACLU and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State have lodged against churches. They just hope that something will eventually stick and set a precedent. This has been a demonic tactic for centuries.

Verses 23-24 give the result of this letter from Smerdis:

Ezra 4:23 Now [That's the Hebrew word *edai*, "thereupon," which indicates sequence. You could translate it as "Then."] when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease. 24 Thus the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until [until when? until] the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ah! There is further confirmation of what I have just been saying. If the work was discontinued as a result of the decree of the specific Artaxerxes that we read about in verses 17-22, then that Artaxerxes couldn't possibly be Artaxerxes Longimanus because the last phrase of verse 24 says that opposition lasted until the second year of the reign of Darius. You ought to see the establishment do hermeneutical gymnastics on that verse. By the way, this also makes me think that James Jordan's view is incorrect. His is much closer to the truth, but he is off on those two verses. The older view of verses 6-7 is the correct one.

So then comes chapter 5. Chapter 5 tells us that Darius has taken over the empire from the usurper, Pseudo-Smerdis. And with this new king, the prophets tell God's people that now is the opportunity to get back to work. The work had only been stopped for a short time. Based on the length of Pseudo-Smerdis' reign, the opposition could have only lasted in the range of months, not years. He was only emperor for seven months. But verse 1 says,

Ezra 5:1 Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

It's a new king, and the prophets tell the Israelites to ignore the opposition of the previous king. It was unconstitutional anyway. So they had good basis for ignoring Smerdis' decree. Like Obama, he was not a legitimate king. Based on Darius' support of the laws of the Medes and the Persians, Darius will surely support Cyrus, not Smerdis. Smerdis was overturning Achaemenid policies. So even what the various emperors did makes sense in terms of their standard policies.

In verses 6 to the end of the chapter is another letter from Tattenai, the governor. Apparently he doesn't believe that Cyrus ever gave permission, as the Jews had claimed. But his mentioning their claim in his letter in verse 13 was his fatal mistake. Unlike Smerdis, who did not honor the laws of the Medes and Persians (which cannot be annulled), Darius did. So Darius is not about to overturn a previously existing edict. He does a search of the archives and finds out that Cyrus had indeed issued an edict to build the temple for the good of the empire. So Darius issues a strongly worded letter to Tattenai that anyone who interfered with the work would be hung. This is the laws of the Medes and the Persians, right? So that puts the fear of God into the governor and he suddenly becomes cooperative. Such threats are the only things that some enemies of God seem to respond to.

On the back side of your outlines, I give a translation of 6:14 that removes the contradiction of that verse with the very next verse. The second part of verse 14 should be translated, "And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus and Darius (even Artaxerxes king of Persia)." This reconciles with the next verse, which makes it clear that the temple was finished "in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius." There could hardly be a decree to build the temple two kings after Darius if it had already been built and finished under Darius. But since Darius had the title of Artaxerxes himself, it is reconciled. This verse is giving the first indicator that Darius will start being referred to from here on in as "Artaxerxes." So, chapter 6:14 is the only verse in the book that absolutely needs to be retranslated on my theory.

But why the change in titles? There is a good reason. Darius had been at war consolidating his power up to this time. In chapter 4 he is only "Darius king of Persia," because he hadn't conquered the revolting provinces yet. The empire had fallen apart. He was not an emperor. By year three Darius had regained the empire and threw a massive feast for his governors to celebrate and to overawe them. We see that in Esther 1. He is declared Ahasuerus upon regaining the empire. That was the Old Persian word for emperor. But then he went to war again, trying to gain the Greek states. In Darius'

Behistun inscription (probably inscribed in his fifth year) he lists the countries he has conquered, including the Greek nations. This may explain his taking on the Greek title, Artaxerxes. So the writer is informing us that a transition has happened with Darius. He is no longer just king of Persia. He is now emperor. Chapter 7 gives the seventh year of his reign and starts calling him Artaxerxes. Chapter 7 of Ezra is the same year that Esther marries Darius - ten months after the temple is built. These next chapters are going to explain a lot when we get to the book of Esther. Hopefully the work we have done in plodding through the controversies will enable us to spend more time on application in the next two books, as well as in the Post-exilic prophets.

But I do want to point out chapter 6:17. Notice the reference to all twelve tribes of Israel being atoned for. They are not lost tribes as some modern cults try to make out. It says,

And they offered sacrifices at the dedication of this house of God, one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel twelve male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

Twelve tribes obviously existed, as the genealogies also show. British Israelism and the Identity Movement do not have a leg to stand on.

Chapter 7 records yet another trip to Israel by Ezra, this time bringing some gifts to beautify the newly constructed temple of God. On the establishment view, Ezra doesn't arrive for another 58 years after the temple is built, which makes no sense. Having heard that the temple was built, he wants it beautified, so he waits for 58 years!? No. He arranges to leave immediately and arrives just a few months later in the 7th year of the same king, who has now achieved the throne title of Artaxerxes. Ezra's trip to Babylon was just to recruit more people and to gain finances for the temple.

Chapter 8 lists the massive amount of silver, gold, and other precious articles - millions of dollars worth in today's money that were being taken back to Jerusalem. They would have been easy targets for bandits on this 800 mile journey. It was a dangerous trip. But verses 21-23 say,

Ezra 8:21 Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. 22 For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." 23 So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.

All the people and the massive amounts of precious items made it safely to Jerusalem. When you add up all the women and children, it couldn't have

been more than 5000 people total. Why so few returnees? He had obviously been trying to conscript more people to come. And the prophets certainly wanted more people to come. You would think that with the temple built, people would flock to Israel. But the Jews were quite satisfied with life in Babylon. And despite the commands of prophets, they stayed put.

But God will soon heat things up in Babylon in the book of Esther, and bring such crisis that it looks like the Jews will be exterminated by wicked Haman, the Agagite - a representative of the Amalekites that God had sworn perpetual war upon in Exodus 17. When we get to Esther we will see that this was the battle of Gog and Magog. But God will use those enemies to humble the Jews and bring them to enthusiastically support the temple.

But before any of that can happen, there needs to be repentance and reformation within the land of Israel. Ezra 9 and 10 records the astounding fact that the Jews were intermarrying with their enemies. You really need to read the whole of chapter 9. It is one of the most moving prayers of repentance in the Bible. I can't take the time to do so this morning, but it is a model for all time of how our covenantal relationship with God's people means that we can confess their sins as being our own even if we have not personally committed those sins. It's taking covenantal ownership.

As a result of Ezra's prayer, the majority of the people repent. Chapter 10 says,

Ezra 10:1 Now while Ezra was praying, and while he was confessing, weeping, and bowing down before the house of God, a very large assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept very bitterly. 2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this. 3 Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. 4 Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

Though the Bible Project video on this book accuses Ezra of violating the law in chapters 9-10, these verses say that the people trembled at the commandment of God and that Ezra was to judge the cases according to the law. And the text says that the wrath of God was upon them until they did this. This was not a bad thing; this was a good thing.

And people say, "But what about 1 Corinthians 7? It says to never leave an unbelieving spouse." That's actually not true. Ezra 9-10 is identical in meaning to 1 Corinthians 7's instructions for mixed marriages. 1 Corinthians 7 actually gives a command to let the unbelieving spouse go (that's a

synonym for “divorce him”) if he is unwilling to dwell with a Christian. And it is understanding what that means “to dwell with” that makes this passage identical to what happened in Ezra. Ezra 10 verses 14-16 show a case-by-case analysis of each couple to see if the law would mandate divorce. The law didn’t automatically mandate divorce of unbelievers. If they had to get rid of all unbelieving wives, there would be no need for these interviews. No, this was a case-by-case decision based upon the law of God.

The conditions for divorcing an unbeliever were laid out in Exodus 21 and in the death penalty crimes of spouses who engaged in witchcraft, necromancy, temple prostitution, and other capital crimes. Don’t trust any book on divorce and remarriage that cannot reconcile Ezra 9-10 with the New Testament. Bahnsen’s view can. My view can. Rushdoony’s view can. So there are at least three different views on divorce and remarriage that can. But most evangelical books on divorce and remarriage are grossly unbiblical and actually overturn the law of God and they completely contradict Ezra 9-10. They explicitly claim that the New Testament overturns the law. In reality, the context of every major passage on divorce and remarriage in the New Testament upholds the law of God on divorce and remarriage.<sup>6</sup> And we don’t have time to get into that.

In any case, the response of the godly remnant was not to blindly follow Ezra or any other leader. This was a genuine reformation of the church before God. Let me prove it. They wept over their sins (verse 1), put their hope in God’s grace (verse 2), recommitted themselves to the covenant (verse 3), trembled at God’s Word (verse 3), took an oath to follow God (verse 5), fasted (verses 6 and following), began to take antithesis seriously (verses 11-14), rejected by name any who opposed God’s Word (verse 15), diligently studied God’s word for every case before them (verses 14-17), and put God even before their loved ones (verses 18 to the end of the book). I agree with Morecraft that this was a remarkable reformation.

Where Nehemiah will be concerned about holiness in society, this book is concerned about holiness in the church. Esther ties up the loose ends by showing God’s providence at work to solidify this reformation for generations to come. As Daniel 11:32 prophesied would happen, the stage would be set for a holy people who would know their God, be strong, and do great exploits for the kingdom.

And we can praise God that He is at work today to bring similar trials to test His people and is capable of similar Reformation. Don’t lose heart. But

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6 See Appendix B

realize that reformation starts with the brokenness of hearts that is displayed in chapters 9-10. May God's people prepare their hearts for Reformation. Amen.

Appendix A Dorsey's chiasm looks impressive initially. It is as follows:

- A Decree to build house (Ezra 1:1-4)
- B Return of Zerubbabel and list of names (Ezra 1:4-2:70)
- C Building of temple and opposition (Ezra 3-6)
- D Ezra's return (Ezra 7-8)
- E Purification of the community (Ezra 9-10)
- D' Nehemiah's return (Neh. 1-2)
- C Building walls and opposition (Neh. 3:1-7:3)
- B' Return of Zerubbabel and list of returnees (Neh. 7:4-72)
- A' Dedication by community to Torah and wall (Neh. 8:1-13:31)

Though the chiasm of Dorsey looks impressive on the surface, a simple reading of the material contained in his references shows how forced it is. The two A sections are of completely disproportionate size, and topically have nothing whatsoever to do with each other. And though the B sections both contain a list of names that returned from Babylon under Zerubbabel, the longer and more complete list is in chapter 12, which is merged into section A'. Similar artificial breakdowns can be shown in both halves of the alleged chiasm. However, even if the forced nature of the sections in Ezra are overlooked, the corresponding sections in Nehemiah simply do not fit. This can be seen from the following graphic.

- A Decree to build house (Ezra 1:1-4)
- B Return of Zerubbabel and list of names (Ezra 1:4-2:70)
  - C Building of temple and opposition (Ezra 3-6)
  - D Ezra's return (Ezra 7-8)
    - E Purification of the community (Ezra 9-10)
    - F Prayer of Nehemiah (Neh. 1:1-11)
- A' Decree to build the city and walls (Neh. 2:1-10)
  - D Nehemiah's return (Neh. 2:11-20)
  - C Building walls and opposition (Neh. 2:11-4:23)
    - E Opposition to slavery (5:1-19)
  - C Building of walls and opposition (6:1-7:3)
  - B Zerubbabel list of names (7:4-73)
    - E Ezra reforms the people 8-11)
  - B Zerubbabel list of names (12:1-26)
    - C Dedication of wall 12:27-43)
      - E Nehemiah reforms temple and society (12:44-13:31)

## Appendix B

- Matthew 5:31-32 is preceded by verses 17-20:

Do not think that I came to destroy (literally “to dismantle”) the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

And Christ then immediately sets up several contrasts between the Pharisees’ distortions of the law and His own inspired teaching of the law. The Pharisees had missed the spirit of the law by taking it out of context.

- Matthew 19:3-12.

Christ is answering the Pharisees’ question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” In Christ’s discourse He refers them to Genesis (vs. 4-6) and to Deuteronomy (vs. 7-8). He is clearly dealing with the lawfulness of divorce, not giving some new standard. Thus in response to man’s invention of causes for divorce, Christ responds in verse 9, “Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Only God (in His law) can define what constitutes grounds for divorce and only He can break the marriage bond legitimately. Christ is thus correcting faulty views of the Old Testament, not replacing the Old Testament.

- Mark 10:2-12

Christ is answering the Pharisees question, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” Christ says, “What did Moses command you?” Christ had a concern for Old Testament law, and the proper contextual understanding of the spirit of the law. The Pharisees had missed the spirit of the law by taking it out of context.

- Luke 16:17-18

And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Clearly Christ sees nothing about his teaching on divorce that is out of accord with any detail of the Old Testament. Indeed, contrary to the views of many, Christ is saying that it is impossible for Old Testament laws on divorce and remarriage to pass away until heaven and earth pass away. Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it.

- Romans 7:1-6.

Paul clearly has the Old Testament regulations in mind when he talks about divorce and remarriage because he starts his discourse by saying, “Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives...” His whole discourse is based upon an understanding of the Old Testament laws on divorce and remarriage.