

Ezra-Nehemiah Discussion Qs

1. What is the message of the single book Ezra-Nehemiah?

Key in the theology of the book is the fact that the house of God is not built when the temple is finished (Ezra 6:15; 515 B.C.).

The law must be taught in Israel (Ezra 7:10), the house of God in Jerusalem must be honored further (Ezra 7:27) and the remnant must confess their sins (Ezra 9:1-10:44). Further for God's covenant to be fulfilled (Neh. 1:5), the walls of the city must be rebuilt and consecrated to God (Neh. 3:1, IOT 186) and the empty city (Neh. 7:4) must be populated (Neh. 11:1,2) to constitute the holy city, the city of God (Neh. 11:1) living by God's Law.

Thus, "Ezra's law, which included a strong emphasis on the prohibition of intermarriage, constituted a people fit to live within Nehemiah's walls" (IOT 187).

Thus the OT ends with a holy people dwelling in a holy city (cf. IOT 187). There is a subtle move from temple to city as the holy place of the Lord.

God is keeping his covenant through historical means including opposition. Nehemiah 9 traces the sin of Israel in contrast to the covenant love of God. Also see Nehemiah 1:5.

2. How is God active keeping covenant per the book?

1) Cyrus fulfills the word of the Lord, Ezra 1:1;

2) God moved the hearts of those who returned, Ezra 1:5; The Lord changed the attitude of the king of Assyria, Ezra 6:22 for the Persian king was now king of Assyria and Assyrian conquest is being undone,

3) The good hand of God was upon Ezra, 7:9; upon the king's heart, 7:27; upon the king for Nehemiah, Neh. 2:8.

The remnant is secured by efficacious grace (Ezra 1:5; 9:8, 13; so hope, 10:2).

Yet the book ends with an "open question" on the sins of the past being repeated. Perfection has not been reached. This gives a look to the future (IOT 187).

What is the theme of the book?

The theme of Ez-Neh is the rebuilding of Jerusalem as the holy city of God.

3. What is the message for us?

a) We are the city of God, Heb. 11:10, 39, 40; 12:22-28.

The OT ends still looking for the city Abraham looked for, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10) showing that they had not received what had been promised (Heb. 11:39) and showing further that "God had something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40).

We have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, to the church of the first born, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant and a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:22-28).

The church made up of Jew and Gentile has walls that are extended to the whole earth! Thus the veil is torn down from top to bottom to open up the holy of holies to all creation and the wall of separation is demolished (Eph. 2:14-18, cf. IOT 187).

b) Give thanks

Therefore, we are to be thankful, and worship God acceptably with reverence and awe (Heb. 12:28).

c) Trust and serve faithfully

Hebrews 12 and 13 give a number of resultant duties for us who are now the holy city of God, the place of his dwelling because Jesus is Jacob's ladder, the bridge between earth and heaven, the place of the presence of God.

So, we look to him (12:2-3) to struggle with sin (v. 4) and to endure hardship as a discipline (v. 7).

We are to strengthen feeble knees (v. 12) to live in peace (v. 14) without bitterness and immorality (15-16), to love (13:1) and serve (13:16) and worship the God of the eternal covenant (13:16, 20).