

Wednesday Night Supplemental Teaching

Covered this week: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ob

Ezra-Nehemiah

Key Themes

- The Physical restoration of the city of Jerusalem
- God's covenant faithfulness
- God's response to prayer
- God's sovereignty over foreign leaders
- The importance of Torah observation

Key Characters: Ezra, Nehemiah, Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Artaxerxes

Setting: The return of God's people from Babylon (538-400BC)

Key Verses:

- Ezra 1:2-3 – "The LORD...has appointed me to build a temple...at Jerusalem."
- Ezra 6:15 – "The Temple was completed."
- Nehemiah 6:15-16 – "The wall was completed...they realized that this work had been done with the help of our God."
- Nehemiah 8:1-6 – "Ezra praised the LORD...and all the people...bowed down and worshiped the Lord."

Outline

- I. Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel Narrative (Ezra)
 - a. Decree of Cyrus (1:1-4)
 - b. Return under Sheshbazzar (1:5-11)
 - c. Return under Zerubbabel (2)
 - d. Rebuilding the Altar and Temple (3-6)
- II. Ezra's Memoirs: Part 1 (Ezra)
 - a. Ezra's Arrival (7-8)
 - b. Ezra's Religious and Social Reforms (9-10)
- III. Nehemiah's Memoirs: Part 1 (Nehemiah)
 - a. Nehemiah's Arrival (1-2)
 - b. Rebuilding the Wall of Jerusalem Despite Opposition (3-4)
 - c. Nehemiah's Economic and Social Reforms (5:1-7:73a)
- IV. Ezra's Memoirs: Part 2 (Nehemiah)
 - a. Reading of the Law (7:73b-8:12)
 - b. Worship and Confession (8:13-9:37)
 - c. Covenant Renewal (9:38-10:39)

- V. Nehemiah's Memoirs: Part 2 (Nehemiah)
 - a. Repopulation of Jerusalem (11:1-12:26)
 - b. Dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem (12:27 – 13:3)
 - c. Further Social and Religious Reforms of Nehemiah (13:4-31)

Other Interesting Notes

- Ezra-Nehemiah was one book in the Hebrew Bible and was initially divided into two books in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible)
- Ezra-Nehemiah was likely written/edited by the same person/school that wrote/edited 1-2 Chronicles.
- Ezra is one of two books in the OT (The other is Daniel) with large portions written in Aramaic and not Hebrew. Official Persian documents of the time were written in Aramaic, the language of international trade.

Esther

Key Themes

- God is at work even when he is behind the scenes.
- The schemes of the wicked are doomed.
- God's plans for his people cannot be thwarted.

Key Characters: Esther, Mordecai, Haman, Xerxes/Ahasueras, Vashti

Key Verses:

- Esther 4:4 – "If you remain silent...deliverance...will arise from another place,...And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"
- Esther 4:16 – "If I perish, I perish."
- Esther 9:20-22 – "Mordecai recorded these events...as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies...when their sorrow was turned into joy and their mourning into a day of celebration."

Outline:

- I. Esther's Rise to Power (1-2)
- II. Mordecai's Refusal to Bow
 - a. Haman's Anger: Mordecai's Jeopardy (3:1-6)
 - b. Xerxes' Decree: Israel's Jeopardy (3:7-15)
- III. Plan for Deliverance: Esther's Jeopardy (4-5)
- IV. Esther's First Banquet
 - a. Xerxes' Insomnia: Mordecai Remembered (6:1-5)
 - b. Haman's Humiliation: Mordecai Honored (6:6-13)
- V. Esther's Second Banquet
 - a. Xerxes' Anger: Haman Exposed and Doomed (7)
 - b. Xerxes' Decree: Israel Given Right to Defend Itself (8)
- VI. Israel's Enemies Destroyed (9:1-19)

- VII. Purim Observed (9:20-32)
- VIII. Resulting Stature of Mordecai (10:1-3)

Other Interesting Notes

- Xerxes I reigned from 486 to 465 BC.
- The earliest Hebrew Manuscripts of the book are from the 11th century BC, but the language of the book reflects a 4th or 5th century BC setting.
- God is not mentioned by name in the book.
- Jews read the book of Esther during the Feast of Purim (“lots”) which occurs in Feb/March.

Wisdom Literature

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs

Key Themes

- Fear of the LORD
- Retribution Principle / Theodicy
- Wisdom for Living
- Worship

Helpful Notes

- Often employs poetic language (Parallelism, Acrostics, Alliteration, Assonance)
- Has similarities to wisdom literature in other cultures of the day (Proverbs)

Job

Key Themes

- God’s justice cannot be reduced to a simple formula like the retribution principle.
- Sometimes the righteous suffer.
- From our limited vantage point, we cannot always discover a rational cause for our suffering. We can trust that God has a purpose for our suffering.
- God’s wisdom exceeds our human wisdom.

Key Characters: Job, Eliphaz, Zophar, Bildad, Elihu

Setting: Almost impossible to know, though some tradition places Job in the time period of the patriarchs.

Key Verses:

- Job 1:8 – “Then the LORD said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job?’”
- Job 1:21 – “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”
- Job 2:10 – “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”
- Job 19:25-27 – “I know that my Redeemer lives...I...will see him with my own eyes.”
- Job 27:1-6 – “As surely as God lives, who has denied me justice...who has made me taste bitterness of soul...I will never admit that you are in the right.”
- Job 28:20-28 – “The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.”

- Job 38:4-11 – “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation?”

Outline

- I. Prologue (1-2)
- II. Dialogues
 - a. Job’s Opening Lament (3)
 - b. First Cycle: Attempts at Consolation (4-14)
 - c. Second Cycle: The Fate of the Wicked (15-21)
 - d. Third Cycle: Specific Accusations (22-27)
- III. Interlude: Hymn to Wisdom (28)
- IV. Discourses
 - a. Job (29-31)
 - b. Elihu (32-37)
 - c. God (38-41)
 - d. Job’s closing statements (40:3-5; 42:1-6)
- V. Epilogue

Interesting Notes

- Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar want Job to confess unknown or unreal sins to appease an angry God.
- The book does not identify Job as a Jew.
- The name it uses most often for God is El Shaddai (as opposed to Yahweh)
- Job’s deep longing for a mediator (5:1; 9:33; 16:18-22; 19:25-27; 33:23) makes this book an excellent way of talking with unbelievers about God’s work in Christ (see Hebrews 4:15).