

Class Schedule: Post-Exile Prophets
Day & Time: Wednesdays from 7:00pm to 7:45pm
Beginning: January 1st, 2020
Ending: June 24th, 2020

<u>Date</u>	<u>Week</u>	<u>Chapters</u>
Jan 1	1	Introduction & Timeline
Jan 8	2	Ezra 1:1-2:70
Jan 15	3	Ezra 3:1-4:24
Jan 22	4	Ezra 5:1-6:22
Jan 29	5	Haggai 1:1-2:23
Feb 5	6	Zechariah 1:1-2:13
Feb 12	7	Zechariah 3:1-4:14
Feb 19	8	Zechariah 5:1-6:15
Feb 26	9	Zechariah 7:1-8:23
Mar 4	10	Zechariah 9:1-10:12
Mar 11	11	Zechariah 11:1-12:14
Mar 18	12	Zechariah 13:1-14:21
Mar 25	13	Esther 1:1-2:23
Apr 1	14	Esther 3:1-5:14
Apr 8	15	Esther 6:1-8:17
Apr 15	16	Esther 9:1-10:3
Apr 22	17	Ezra 7:1-8:36
Apr 29	18	Ezra 9:1-10:44
May 6	19	Nehemiah 1:1-2:20
May 13	20	Nehemiah 3:1-4:23
May 20	21	Nehemiah 5:1-7:73
May 27	22	Nehemiah 8:1-9:38
Jun 3	23	Nehemiah 10:1-11:36
Jun 10	24	Nehemiah 12:1-13:31
Jun 17	25	Malachi 1:1-2:17
Jun 24	26	Malachi 3:1-4:6

Between Malachi and Jesus

EZRA

Ezra continues the Old Testament narrative of 2 Chronicles by showing how God fulfills His promise to return His people to the Land of Promise after seventy years of exile. Israel's "second exodus," this one from Babylon, is less impressive because only a remnant chooses to leave Babylon. Ezra relates the story of two returns from Babylon—the first led by Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (chs. 1–6), and the second under the leadership of Ezra to rebuild the spiritual condition of the people (chs. 7–10).

Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as a unit in the original Hebrew and in the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. The two were separated in the Latin translation, and English translations have likewise treated them as separate works.

Author

Although Ezra is not specifically mentioned as the author, he is certainly the best candidate. Jewish tradition (the Talmud) attributes the book to Ezra, and portions of the work (7:28–9:15) are written in the first person, from Ezra's point of view. As in Chronicles, there is a strong priestly emphasis, and Ezra was a direct priestly descendant of Aaron through Eleazar, Phineas, and Zadok (7:1–5).

Date

Just as the Israelites were taken into exile in three successive stages (605, 597, 586 B.C.), they returned in three stages. The first occurred under the leadership of Zerubbabel (c. 538 B.C.). After considerable delay, this return resulted in the rebuilding of the temple (c. 520–516 B.C.), encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Ezra led the second return in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (c. 458 B.C.). Nehemiah led the final return in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes I (c. 444 B.C.). Chronologically, the events of the book of Esther occur during a ten-to-twelve-year period (483–473 B.C.) between the first and second returns.

Ezra (if he in fact is the author-compiler) probably wrote this book between 457 B.C. (the events of chs. 7–10) and 444 B.C. (Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem). During the period covered by the book of Ezra, Gautama Buddha (c. 560–480 B.C.) was in India, Confucius (551–479 B.C.) was in China, and Socrates (470–399 B.C.) was in Greece.

Themes and Literary Structure

Ezra relates the first two returns from Babylon, the first led by Zerubbabel and the second led decades later by Ezra. Its two divisions are the restoration of the temple (chs. 1–6) and the reformation of the people (chs. 7–10).

The basic theme of Ezra is restoration—the restoration of the temple and the spiritual, moral, and social restoration of the returned remnant in Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra. Both are undertaken despite opposition and difficulty.

The restoration of temple and people required a reassertion of the distinctive identity of Israel and her faith, together with separation from other peoples and pagan beliefs. This restoration was taking place in the context of the Persian empire, in which the dominant religious tendency was the merging of religious beliefs into one. The various peoples of the empire were encouraged to maintain their distinctive cultures, but without religious exclusivism. In this environment, the Jews experienced tremendous temptation to surrender all their previous claims to having an exclusive revelation from God. In addition, there was enormous temptation to surrender those

behaviors which had been designed to separate them from the surrounding pagan cultures. In this context, the reestablishment of a temple worship purified of pagan religious influences and the purification of the people from intermarriage with other peoples were both necessary.

God’s faithfulness is seen in the way He sovereignly protects His people in the midst of a powerful empire while they are in captivity. They prosper in their exile, and God raises up pagan kings who are sympathetic to their cause and encourage them to rebuild their homeland. God also provides zealous and capable leaders who direct the return and the rebuilding.

Ezra at a Glance

FOCUS	RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE		REFORMATION OF THE PEOPLE	
REFERENCE	1:1 _____	3:1 _____	7:1 _____	9:1 _____ 10:44
DIVISION	FIRST RETURN TO JERUSALEM	CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE	SECOND RETURN TO JERUSALEM	RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE
TOPIC	ZERUBBABEL		EZRA	
	FIRST RETURN OF 49,897		SECOND RETURN OF 1,754	
LOCATION	PERSIA TO JERUSALEM		PERSIA TO JERUSALEM	
TIME	22 YEARS (538–516 B.C.)		1 YEAR (458–457 B.C.)	

OUTLINE OF EZRA

Part One: The Restoration of the Temple of God (1:1–6:22)

I. The First Return to Jerusalem Under Zerubbabel 1:1–2:70

- A. Decree of Cyrus 1:1–4
- B. Gifts from Israel and Cyrus 1:5–11
- C. Census of the Returning People 2:1–63
- D. The Return Completed 2:64–70

II. The Construction of the Temple 3:1–6:22

- A. Construction of the Temple Foundation 3:1–13
- B. Interruption of the Temple Construction 4:1–24
- C. Completion of the Temple 5:1–6:18
- D. Celebration of the Passover 6:19–22

Part Two: The Reformation of the People of God (7:1–10:44)

I. The Second Return to Jerusalem Under Ezra 7:1–8:36

- A. The Decree of Artaxerxes 7:1–28
- B. Census of the Returning Israelites 8:1–14
- C. Spiritual Preparation for the Return 8:15–23
- D. The Return Is Completed 8:24–36

II. The Restoration of the People 9:1–10:44

- A. Israel Intermarries 9:1, 2

- B. Ezra Intercedes with God 9:3–15
- C. Reformation of Israel 10:1–44

The Return from Exile

When Cyrus the Persian captured Babylon in 539 B.C., government controls on captive peoples were loosened and the way was opened for exiled Judah to begin the return to her homeland. The ascension and victory of Cyrus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 44:28–45:4. Three major expeditions made the journey: one in 538–537 B.C. under Zerubbabel, the second under Ezra in 458 B.C., and the last under Nehemiah in 444 B.C.

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¹Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

Class Worksheets ~ Ezra Chapters 1&2
January 8th

Research:

Find the prophecies that God foretold Cyrus' proclamation freeing the Jewish people and rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Chapter Questions:

1. What year is the first year of Cyrus?
2. How were the Jewish captives able to afford to return and rebuild the Temple?
3. How many articles from Solomon's Temple were returned to Jerusalem by Cyrus?
4. Did the returnees all settle in Jerusalem?
5. What clues are there that not all the returnees were poor?
6. Why did a priest have to consult the Urim and Thummim?
7. What are the Urim and the Thummim?

Application:

Does the return of the exiles to Jerusalem impact your faith in God?

Class Worksheets ~ Ezra Chapters 3&4
January 15th

Research:

Make a timeline of the kings of Persia below.

Kings:

Years:

Chapter Questions:

1. What did the Jews build first?

2. What was the reaction to the laying of the foundation of the temple?

3. Who were the adversaries of the Jews rebuilding efforts? What are they called in the NT?

4. What were the adversaries resisting until Darius' reign?

5. What accusations were made to Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes? Were they true?

6. In the letter to Artaxerxes what construction are the enemies trying to stop?

7. Verses 23 & 24 are often difficult to understand. What is the difficulty and what are the possible explanations?

8. Note the verse/s in chapter 4 where each book; Haggai, Zechariah, Nehemiah, and Esther occur?

Application:

How do our enemies today resist our efforts to do God's will?

Class Worksheets ~ Ezra Chapters 5&6
January 22nd

Chapter Questions:

1. Who motivated the Jews to restart the building of the temple?

2. What did the governor of the region want to know about their building efforts?

3. Why didn't the governor stop their work while he waited for a response from the king?

4. What did the governor ask of Darius the king?

5. What did Darius decree to the governor of their region?

6. How did Artaxerxes' command aid the temple? See chapter 7.

7. Who is the king of Assyria?

8. How did the people respond to the renewal of the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread?

Application:

What can we learn about doing God's will in the face of opposition?

HAGGAI

Haggai is second only to Obadiah in brevity among the Old Testament books, but this strong and frank series of four brief sermons accomplishes its intended effect. The work on the temple had ceased and the people had become more concerned with the beautification of their own houses than with the building of the central sanctuary of God. Because of their misplaced priorities, their future labors cannot be blessed by God. Only when the people put the Lord first by completing the task He set before them will His hand of blessing once again be upon them.

Author

The prophet Haggai is known only from this book and from two references to him in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. There he is seen working alongside the younger prophet Zechariah in the ministry of encouraging the rebuilding of the temple.

Haggai returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and evidently lived in Jerusalem. Some interpret 2:3 to mean that he was born in Judah before the 586 B.C. destruction of the first temple and was one of the small company who could remember the splendor of the former temple. This would mean that Haggai was about seventy-five years old when he prophesied in 520 B.C. It is equally likely, however, that he was born in Babylon during the captivity.

Date

In 538 B.C., Cyrus of Persia issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and rebuild their temple, and in 536 B.C. work on the temple commenced. The returning exiles met with strong opposition from the Samaritans in the land, and work on the temple stopped in 534 B.C. It was in this context that God called His prophets Haggai and Zechariah to the same task of urging the people to complete the temple.

All four sermons of Haggai are precisely dated in the year 520 B.C., the second year of the reign of Darius I (521–486 B.C.), king of Persia. The first was delivered on the first day of the Hebrew month of Elul (August-September), the second on the first day of Tishri (September-October), and the last two on the twenty-fourth day of Kislev (November-December). Later, the messages were compiled into what is now known as the book of Haggai.

Haggai, along with Zechariah and Malachi, faced a different situation than had the pre-exilic prophets. Those earlier prophets confronted a people who tended to depend upon physical ceremonies and buildings rather than upon a true relationship with God marked by obedience. In contrast, the postexilic prophets ministered to a discouraged and apathetic people who were tempted to believe that nothing they did made any difference from a religious standpoint. The destruction of Jerusalem had humbled a once-proud people and they were influenced by the Persian view of all religions as equal in value.

As a result, the returning Jews saw little reason to pay careful attention to their distinctive laws and practices, and they felt no need to be overly concerned about rebuilding the temple. Of course, the dangers of this situation were profound. In short order, the Jews would be assimilated into the pagan culture around them; the revelatory heritage would be lost, and the messianic line of promise extinguished. The postexilic prophets were faced with the task of encouraging the people to distinguish themselves from the other peoples by the character of their obedience, and this obedience had to begin with the rebuilding of the temple and the reestablishment of the Mosaic laws.

Themes and Literary Structure

Haggai's basic theme is clear: the remnant must reorder its priorities and complete the temple before it can expect the blessings of God. The four messages recorded here may be entitled: the completion of the latter temple (1:1–15), the glory of the latter temple (2:1–9), the present blessings of obedience (2:10–19), and the future blessings of promise (2:20–23).

The promise of Haggai 2:9 points ahead to the crucial role the second temple was to have in God's redemptive plan. Herod the Great later spent years enlarging and enriching this temple, and it was filled with the glory of God incarnate every time Christ came to Jerusalem.

The Messiah is also portrayed in the person of Zerubbabel (2:23), who becomes the center of the messianic line, sealing both branches together.

Haggai at a Glance

FOCUS	COMPLETION OF THE LATTER TEMPLE	GLORY OF THE LATTER TEMPLE	PRESENT BLESSINGS OF OBEDIENCE	FUTURE BLESSINGS THROUGH PROMISE
REFERENCE	1:1 _____	2:1 _____	2:10 _____	2:20 _____ 2:23
DIVISION	"CONSIDER YOUR WAYS . . . MY HOUSE THAT IS IN RUINS."	"THE GLORY OF THIS LATTER TEMPLE SHALL BE GREATER."	"FROM THIS DAY I WILL BLESS YOU."	"I WILL SHAKE HEAVEN AND EARTH."
TOPIC	THE TEMPLE OF GOD		THE BLESSINGS OF GOD	
	FIRST REBUKE (PRESENT)	FIRST ENCOURAGEMENT (FUTURE)	SECOND REBUKE (PRESENT)	SECOND ENCOURAGEMENT (FUTURE)
LOCATION	JERUSALEM			
TIME	SEPTEMBER 1 520 B.C.	OCTOBER 21 520 B.C.	DECEMBER 24 520 B.C.	DECEMBER 24 520 B.C.

OUTLINE OF HAGGAI

- I. **The Completion of the Latter Temple 1:1–15**
 - A. The Temple Is Not Complete 1:1–6
 - B. The Temple Must Be Completed 1:7–15
- II. **The Glory of the Latter Temple 2:1–9**
 - A. The Latter Temple Is Not as Glorious as the First 2:1–3
 - B. The Latter Temple Will Be More Glorious than the First 2:4–9
- III. **The Present Blessings of Obedience 2:10–19**
 - A. The Disobedience of the Remnant 2:10–14
 - B. The Solution: The Obedience of the Remnant 2:15–19
- IV. **The Future Blessings Through Promise 2:20–23**
 - A. The Future Destruction of the Nations 2:20–22
 - B. The Future Recognition of Zerubbabel 2:23

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²Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts: Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

Class Worksheets ~ Haggai Chapters 1&2
January 29th

Research:

When is Haggai called upon by God to command the people to build the temple?

Chapter Questions:

1. From Ezra we know the Samaritans caused difficulties for the Jews in rebuilding the Temple, but from God's perspective, why was the Temple not yet built?

2. They were told to consider their ways, what was the problem with their ways?

3. How long did it take the people to respond to the LORD's message?

4. Why did God tell the people that His Spirit remained among them, didn't they already know that, why or why not?

5. How did the new Temple compare to Solomon's temple in the eyes of those who saw the first one?

6. How would the glory of the latter Temple compare with the former? What is the latter Temple?

7. What is the significance of Zerubbabel being chosen by God?

Application:

Obviously we should always consider our way, but when should we take special notice to consider our ways?

ZECHARIAH

For a dozen years or more, the task of rebuilding the temple had been half completed. The prophet Zechariah was commissioned by God to encourage the people to complete this important task. Rather than exhorting them with strong words of rebuke, Zechariah offered a very positive goal: the temple must be built, for someday the glory of the Messiah would inhabit it.

Author

Zechariah, whose name means “Yahweh Remembers,” was one of the postexilic prophets and a contemporary of Haggai. The name “Zechariah” was a popular one in the Old Testament, being shared by no fewer than twenty-nine Old Testament characters.

As the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo, he came from one of the priestly families of the tribe of Levi. He was born in Babylon and was brought by his grandfather to Palestine when the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel.

Date

Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest. The historical setting for chapters 1–8 is the same as that of Haggai (520–518 B.C.). Work was resumed on the temple in 520 B.C. and the project was completed in 516 B.C.

Chapters 9–14 are undated, but stylistic differences and references to Greece (9:13) indicate a date of between 480 and 470 B.C. This would mean that Darius I (521–486 B.C.) had passed from the scene and had been succeeded by Xerxes (486–464 B.C.), the king who made Esther queen of Persia.

Themes and Literary Structure

Zechariah uses a series of eight visions, four messages, and two burdens to portray God’s future plans for His covenant people. The first eight chapters were written to encourage the remnant while they were rebuilding the temple; the last six chapters were written after the completion of the temple to anticipate Israel’s coming Messiah. Zechariah moves from gentile domination to messianic rule, from persecution to peace, and from uncleanness to holiness.

The last six chapters are not clearly tied to a specific historical situation in the life of the prophet but look forward to the events leading up to and including the coming messianic age. Here the rise of Greece, the advent and rejection of the Messiah, and the final triumph of the Messiah are foretold.

Zechariah at a Glance

FOCUS	EIGHT VISIONS			FOUR MESSAGES	TWO BURDENS	
REFERENCE	1:1 ———	1:7 ———	6:9 ———	7:1 ———	9:1 ———	12:1 ——— —— 14:21
DIVISION	CALL TO REPENTANCE	EIGHT VISIONS	CROWNING OF JOSHUA	QUESTION OF FASTING	FIRST BURDEN: REJECTION OF THE MESSIAH	SECOND BURDEN: REIGN OF THE MESSIAH
TOPIC	PICTURES			PROBLEM	PREDICTION	
	ISRAEL'S FORTUNE			ISRAEL'S FASTINGS	ISRAEL'S FUTURE	
LOCATION	JERUSALEM					
TIME	WHILE BUILDING THE TEMPLE (520–518 B.C.)				AFTER BUILDING THE TEMPLE (c. 480–470 B.C.)	

OUTLINE OF ZECHARIAH

- I. The Call to Repentance 1:1–6**
- II. The Eight Visions of Zechariah 1:7–6:8**
 - A. The Horses Among the Myrtle Trees 1:7–17
 - B. The Four Horns and Four Craftsmen 1:18–21
 - C. The Man with the Measuring Line 2:1–13
 - D. The Cleansing of Joshua, the High Priest 3:1–10
 - E. The Golden Lampstand and Olive Trees 4:1–14
 - F. The Flying Scroll 5:1–4
 - G. The Woman in the Basket 5:5–11
 - H. The Four Chariots 6:1–8
- III. The Crowning of Joshua 6:9–15**
- IV. The Question of Fasting 7:1–3**
- V. The Four Messages of Zechariah 7:4–8:23**
 - A. Rebuke of Hypocrisy 7:4–7
 - B. Repent of Disobedience 7:8–14
 - C. Restoration of Israel 8:1–7
 - D. Rejoice in Israel's Future 8:18–23
- VI. The Two Burdens of Zechariah 9:1–14:21**
 - A. The First Burden: The Rejection of the Messiah 9:1–11:17
 - 1. Judgment on Surrounding Nations 9:1–8
 - 2. Coming of the Messiah 9:9–10:12
 - 3. Rejection of the Messiah 11:1–17
 - B. The Second Burden: The Reign of the Messiah 12:1–14:21
 - 1. Deliverance of Israel 12:1–13:9
 - 2. Reign of the Messiah 14:1–21

Zechariah's Visions

The visions of Zechariah had historical meaning for his day, but they also have meaning for all time. God will save His people and bring judgment on the wicked.	
Vision	Significance
Man and horses among the myrtle trees (1:8)	The Lord will again be merciful to Jerusalem (1:14, 16, 17).
Four horns, four craftsmen (1:18-20)	Those who scattered Judah are cast out (1:21).
Man with measuring line (2:1)	God will be a protective wall of fire around Jerusalem (2:3-5).
Cleansing of Joshua (3:4)	The Servant, the Branch, comes to save (3:8, 9).
Golden lampstand and olive trees (4:2, 3)	The Lord empowers Israel by His Spirit (4:6).
Flying scroll (5:1)	Dishonesty is cursed (5:3).
Woman in the basket (5:6, 7)	Wickedness will be removed (5:9).
Four chariots (6:1)	The spirits of heaven execute judgment on the whole earth (6:5, 7).

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³Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 1&2
February 5th

Research:

What chapters are contemporary with Haggai's prophecies?

In the first 8 chapters what is the main method Zechariah received his messages?

Chapter Questions:

1. What is the first message that came to Zechariah from the LORD?
2. What did the four horsemen tell the angel of the LORD?
3. What did the angel of the LORD ask the LORD?
4. Who are the four horns and what did they do?
5. Who are the four craftsmen and what did they do?
6. What was Jerusalem being measured for?
7. Who is coming to dwell in their midst?
8. Who would become his people?

Application:

Is the LORD a wall of fire around us as he was for those who left Egypt?

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 3&4
February 12th

Research:

What was the filth that Joshua's clothes were covered with in 3:3?

Chapter Questions:

1. How would Satan be opposing Joshua?

2. How did Joshua become clean?

3. After Joshua was clothed in clean clothes what was he admonished to do?

4. How was Joshua and his companions a sign to the people?

5. In what day would the iniquity of the land be removed?

6. What vision was Zechariah shown? What did it mean?

7. What are the two olive trees doing in the vision? Who do they represent?

Application:

What would these two visions have meant to Joshua and Zerubbabel?

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 5&6
February 19th

Research:

Where is the land of Shinar?

Chapter Questions:

1. How big is the flying scroll Zechariah sees? Why does it appear so big?
2. What is the message of the scroll?
3. What does the woman in the basket represent?
4. Why is the woman in the basket taken to the land of Shinar?
5. Why were the four spirits of heaven sent out from the Lord?
6. How did the spirits give rest to God's Spirit?
7. Why was Zechariah commanded to crown the High Priest Joshua?

Application:

Are the visions given to Zechariah fulfilled by Joshua and Zerubbabel?

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 7&8
February 26th

Research:

What are the fasts (in the fifth and seventh months) that are being asked about?

Chapter Questions:

1. Why did the the word of the LORD come to Zechariah?

2. Was God pleased with their fasts on the 5th and 7th months during exile?

3. What behavior would have pleased God?

4. Why was the land of Israel made desolate?

5. How does the word of the LORD that comes in chapter 8 apply to the question he was asked by the people?

6. How will the remnant be treated differently than the people before?

7. What would the fasts in the 4th, 5th, 7th, and 10th months become?

Application:

When is this prophecy fulfilled and How?

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 9&10
March 4th

Chapter Questions:

1. What kind of Word from God did Zechariah receive about Israel's neighbors?

2. What was God prophesying about His house in verses 1-8?

3. What was the coming King bringing to all people and nations?

4. When did Jesus fulfill this prophecy?

5. What did God prophecy he would do for his people in verses 11-17?

6. What is the latter rain that Zechariah refers to in 10:1?

7. What does the house of Joseph refer to in 10:6?

8. What was going to happen to the house of Israel that God redeemed, specifically in vss. 8-12?

Application:

How is the prophecy of prosperity for Israel fulfilled, and what part do we have in it?

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 11&12
March 11th

Chapter Questions:

1. Who are the prophecies in Chapter 11 directed at?

2. What is the flock that Zechariah was told to shepherd?

3. Why were the two staffs Zechariah had called Grace (or Beauty) and Unity (or Bonds)?

4. Why is the staff Grace broken in two by Zechariah?

5. What was the price Zechariah was paid for shepherding the flock? Was it a large sum?

6. What did Zechariah do with the money? What did this foretell?

7. Why is the second staff broken in two by Zechariah?

8. When are the nations of the earth going to gather against Jerusalem?

9. Who mourns for the pierced One? Why?

Application:

Who are the worthless shepherds Zechariah prophesied about?

Class Worksheets ~ Zechariah Chapters 13&14
March 18th

Chapter Questions:

1. What “day” is under discussion in chapter 13?

2. What will happen for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem?

3. In that “day” what is God going to put an end to?

4. When the Shepherd is struck what happens to the sheep?

5. Who does the LORD turn against after the Shepherd is struck?

6. When does the prophecy of the Day of the LORD in Chapter 14 take place?

7. How will a remnant not be cut off if the city of Jerusalem is taken?

8. What does the prophecy say God will do after the city is taken?

9. What is the end envisioned after the day of the LORD is done?

Application:

How clear are the prophecies in chapters 13 & 14 to you?

ESTHER

God's hand of providence and protection on behalf of His people is evident throughout the book of Esther, even though the name of God does not appear once in the work. Haman's plot to destroy the Jews brings grave danger to God's people and is countered by the courage of Esther and the counsel of her wise cousin Mordecai, resulting in a great deliverance. The Jewish feast of Purim becomes an annual reminder of God's faithfulness on behalf of His people.

Author

While the text of Esther does not specify the author's identity, the writer's knowledge of Persian customs, the palace at Susa, and details of the events in the reign of Ahasuerus indicate that the author lived in Persia during this period. The obvious Jewish nationalism and knowledge further suggest that the author was Jewish. Ezra and Nehemiah have been suggested as possible authors, but the style of Esther differs markedly from Ezra and Nehemiah and any precise identification remains speculative.

Date

The events described in Esther occurred between 483–473 B.C. and fit between chapters 6 and 7 of Ezra, between the first return led by Zerubbabel and the second led by Ezra. That the author speaks of King Ahasuerus in the past tense (1:1) suggests that the book may have been written during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424 B.C.). Linguistically, the book may be dated to the latter half of the fifth or the early fourth century B.C.

Themes and Literary Structure

Historically, the book of Esther unveils a segment of Jewish history occurring during the Jewish captivity in Persia. It provides the only biblical portrait of the vast majority of Jews who chose to remain in Persia rather than return to Palestine.

Although there is little reason to doubt its historical character, the book of Esther is also a finely-crafted literary work in which the author presents a complicated plot of danger and deliverance with considerable skill. The book of Esther may be divided into two main sections: the threat to the Jews (chs. 1–4) and the triumph of the Jews (chs. 5–10).

Theologically, the theme of God's providential protection of His people pervades this book, although the name of God, or even the word for "God," is not found in the text—a fact that accounts for some of the later objections to the book's canonicity. Though God disciplines His people, He does not abandon them. The God of Israel is sovereign over history and His providence is evident on every page. Esther "happens" to be chosen queen; her cousin Mordecai "happens" to foil an assassination plot against the king; the king "happens" to read of Mordecai's deed at just the right time. The book implies that none of this is accidental, that God is firmly in control and is determined to keep His covenant promises to the children of Abraham.

The conduct of God's people is also important in Esther. The trouble comes to the Jews because Mordecai will not give worship to someone other than God. He will not surrender his commitment to God even to save himself and his people.

The theme of feasting is very prominent in Esther. A total of ten banquets are mentioned and crucial developments in the story typically happen at feasts (e.g., the disobedience of Vashti, Esther's attempt to save her people, the unmasking and condemnation of Haman). This banquet theme serves to highlight one important purpose of the book: an explanation of the origin of the Jewish Feast of Purim (9:18–32).

Esther at a Glance

FOCUS	THREAT TO THE JEWS		TRIUMPH OF THE JEWS	
REFERENCE	1:1 _____	2:21 _____	5:1 _____	8:4 _____ 10:3
DIVISION	SELECTION OF ESTHER AS QUEEN	FORMULATION OF THE PLOT BY HAMAN	TRIUMPH OF MORDECAI OVER HAMAN	TRIUMPH OF ISRAEL OVER HER ENEMIES
TOPIC	FEASTS OF AHASUERUS		FEASTS OF ESTHER AND PURIM	
	GRAVE DANGER		GREAT DELIVERANCE	
LOCATION	PERSIA			
TIME	10 YEARS (483–473 B.C.)			

OUTLINE OF ESTHER

Part One: The Threat to the Jews (1:1–4:17)

I. The Selection of Esther as Queen 1:1–2:20

- A. The Divorce of Vashti 1:1–22
- B. The Marriage to Esther 2:1–20

II. The Formulation of the Plot by Haman 2:21–4:17

- A. Mordecai Reveals the Plot to Murder the King 2:21–23
- B. Haman Plots to Murder the Jews 3:1–4:17

Part Two: The Triumph of the Jews (5:1–10:3)

I. The Triumph of Mordecai over Haman 5:1–8:3

- A. Setting for the Triumph 5:1–6:3
- B. Mordecai Is Honored 6:4–14
- C. Haman Dies on Gallows Prepared for Mordecai 7:1–10
- D. Mordecai Is Given Haman's House 8:1–3

II. The Triumph of Israel over Her Enemies 8:4–10:3

- A. Preparation for the Victory of Israel 8:4–17
- B. Israel's Victory over Her Enemies 9:1–16
- C. Israel's Celebration 9:17–10:3

Jewish Feasts

The Feast of Purim, which was established in the month of Adar—the last month of the sacred year—is a continual reminder of the heroism of Esther in risking her throne and life to save her people and to become God's channel for deliverance. The feast did not celebrate the destruction of the enemies, but rather the "resting" of the Jews from the oppression of their enemies. The days of Purim are characterized by feasting and gladness for deliverance and redemption through the providential care of God.

Jewish Feasts

<i>Feast of</i>	<i>Month on Jewish Calendar</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Correspondin g Month</i>	<i>References</i>
Passover	Nisan	14	Mar.–Apr.	Ex. 12:1-14; Matt. 26:17–20
*Unleavened Bread	Nisan	15–21	Mar.–Apr.	Ex. 12:15-20
Firstfruits	Nisan or Sivan	16 6	Mar.–Apr. May–June	Lev. 23:9–14; Num. 28:26
*Pentecost (Harvest or Weeks)	Sivan	6 (50 days after barley harvest)	May-June	Deut. 16:9–12; Acts 2:1
Trumpets, <i>Rosh Hashanah</i>	Tishri	1, 2	Sept.–Oct.	Num. 29:1–6
Day of Atonement, <i>Yom Kippur</i>	Tishri	10	Sept.–Oct.	Lev. 23:26-32; Heb. 9:7
Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering)	Tishri	15–22	Sept.–Oct.	Neh. 8:13-18; John 7:2
Dedication (Lights), Hanukkah	Chislev	25 (8 days)	Nov.–Dec.	John 10:22
Purium (Lots)	Adar	14, 15	Feb.-Mar.	Esth. 9:18–32
* The three major feasts for which all males of Israel were required to travel to the Temple in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14–19).				

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⁴Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

Class Worksheets ~ Esther Chapters 1&2
March 25th

Research:

Where and when do the events of the book of Esther take place?

Chapter Questions:

1. When the story opens what is King Ahasuerus doing?
2. Why did the King command Queen Vashti to come to his feast?
3. What was the queen doing and what was her response?
4. What are the leaders afraid will happen because of her response to Ahasuerus?
5. What does the King decree to all the provinces under his rule?
6. Why is a beauty contest held?
7. What preparations were made for the women chosen and how long did it take?
8. Who is Mordecai and what is his relationship to Esther?
9. How did Mordecai save the life of King Ahsuerus?

Application:

How can events even as seemingly trivial as a beauty contest be important in God's plan for His people?

Class Worksheets ~ Esther Chapters 3 - 5
April 1st

Chapter Questions:

1. Who is Haman and why was Mordecai commanded to bow and pay homage to him?

2. Why would Mordecai not bow or pay homage to Haman?

3. Why did Haman seek to kill all the Jews?

4. What did Haman cast the lot for?

5. What did Haman ask of King Ahasuerus and what decree did Haman issue?

6. Explain how Esther and Mordecai responded when they learned of this decree?

7. How did Esther risk her life to help the Jews?

8. What did Haman's family and friends suggest Haman do to Mordecai?

Application:

What does Mordecai's words to Esther in 4:14 teach us about our actions?

Class Worksheets ~ Esther Chapters 6 - 8
April 8th

Chapter Questions:

1. Why was King Ahasuerus having his chronicles read to him in the middle of the night?

2. What was the king reminded of and what did he want to do about it?

3. Why did the king ask advice from Haman?

4. Why did Haman give the advice he did to the king?

5. What did Haman realize was happening to his plot against Mordecai?

6. What request did Esther make of Ahasuerus?

7. How had the Jews been sold to be killed?

8. Esther said it would be the king's loss even if the Jews were sold away as slaves, how?

9. Why was Mordecai hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai?

Application:

What things happened to make Ahasuerus turn his favor from Haman to Mordecai?

Class Worksheets ~ Esther Chapters 9&10
April 15th

Chapter Questions:

1. On the day Haman had chosen (by lot) to kill all the Jews, what happened?

2. Why were many leaders afraid to help the Jews' enemies?

3. Why did the Jews not take the plunder (the goods of the people killed)?

4. What additional request did Esther make of Ahasuerus?

5. Why would they hang all the sons of Haman on the gallows?

6. What is the feast of Purim? What does it commemorate? Who instituted it?

7. How did Mordecai rise to great power in Persia?

8. What other godly persons does this remind you of?

Application:

What is the lesson of the book of Esther for us?

Class Worksheets ~ Ezra Chapters 7&8
April 22nd

Research:

How big of a gap is there between the end of chapter 6 and the story of chapter 7?

How long before the events of Chapter 7 did the story of Esther occur?

Chapter Questions:

1. What did Ezra request of Artaxerxes?
2. Who traveled with Ezra to Jerusalem?
3. Why did Ezra want to go to Jerusalem?
4. What did Ezra do to prepare himself for his mission?
5. What authority did Artaxerxes give to Ezra in his letter?
6. Why did Ezra search for Levites when they gathered by the river?
7. Why did Ezra declare a fast before leaving?
8. What did Ezra do when he reached Jerusalem?

Application:

Why was Ezra ashamed to ask for soldiers to protect them on the road from thieves?

Class Worksheets ~ Ezra Chapters 9&10
April 29th

Chapter Questions:

1. What problem is Ezra presented with?

2. How is Ezra's initial response to what he hears?

3. What does Ezra do at the evening sacrifice? Where is he?

4. What commandments about marriage does Ezra quote?

5. Is there a difference between being given or taken in marriage? Who is doing the giving and taking?

6. Ezra asks God if He would not consume them until there was no remnant because of their sin, do you think this is true, why or why not?

7. Who suggests a plan to deal with the sin?

8. What plan did Ezra have for the the people who married pagan wives, and how long did it take to accomplish the plan?

9. Who opposed Ezra's plan? Are any of them mentioned elsewhere in Ezra?

Application:

Does God ask his people to do difficult things sometimes? Why?

NEHEMIAH

Nehemiah, contemporary of Ezra and cupbearer to the king in the Persian palace, led the third and last return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile. Granted permission by the Persian king to return to his homeland, Nehemiah challenged his countrymen to rebuild the shattered walls of Jerusalem. In spite of opposition, the task was completed in only fifty-two days. By contrast, the task of reviving and reforming the people of God demanded years of Nehemiah's godly life and leadership.

The book of Nehemiah is a complement to the book of Ezra. It provides additional information about the religious and social reforms that took place in Judah and Jerusalem in the mid-fifth century B.C. The book derives its present title from the main character, Nehemiah, whose name appears in 1:1. Originally united with the book of Ezra in the Hebrew text, Nehemiah was treated as a separate book when the Scriptures were translated into Latin.

Author

Because Ezra and Nehemiah were treated as one book in the Hebrew text, and because the two books show certain similarities in style and outlook, many scholars have believed that Ezra and Nehemiah were originally compiled by the same person, probably Ezra. It is important that 1:1 describes the contents as "the words of Nehemiah." This assertion is supported by the narrative about Nehemiah being in the first person. Thus, if Ezra was the compiler, he was apparently quoting directly from the writings of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah held the very responsible position of cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. This was evidently more akin to being a personal advisor than merely something like a butler. That the king eventually made Nehemiah governor of Judah bears witness to his considerable administrative abilities. Frequently the cupbearer was also a eunuch, and this may explain why there is no reference to Nehemiah's family.

Date

Nehemiah is closely associated with the ministry of his contemporary, Ezra. As a priest, Ezra helped to bring spiritual revival; Nehemiah as governor helped to bring physical and political reconstruction and led the people in moral reform. Together, they combined to make an effective team in rebuilding the postexilic remnant. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, also ministered during this time to provide additional moral and spiritual direction.

The book of Nehemiah focuses on the events surrounding the third return from the Exile, in 444 B.C. Nehemiah served twice as governor of Judah. His first time as governor spanned twelve years (5:14), and ended when he returned to Babylon (13:6). He then returned to Jerusalem "after certain days." If the king was still Artaxerxes I, as seems likely, then Nehemiah's second governorship began prior to 424 B.C., when the king died. Thus, the book of Nehemiah was probably written between 430 and 420 B.C.

Themes and Literary Structure

The book of Nehemiah completes the historical account of God's people in the Old Testament, about four hundred years before the birth of the promised Messiah. Its two divisions are: the reconstruction of the wall (chs. 1–13), and the restoration of the people (chs. 8–13).

While Ezra deals with the religious restoration of Judah, Nehemiah is primarily concerned with Judah’s political and geographical restoration. Great attention is devoted to the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls, because Jerusalem was the spiritual and political center of Judah. Without walls, Jerusalem could hardly be considered a city at all.

Prominent in the book of Nehemiah, as in the rest of the Old Testament, is the concept of God’s covenant with His people. The Old Testament treats Israel’s history in terms of her faithfulness or disobedience to the covenant. Nehemiah 9:1–10:39 records a covenant renewal ceremony in which the people commit themselves to separate from the Gentiles in marriage and to obey God’s commandments.

God’s faithfulness to His people is highlighted by the extensive narrative of the rebuilding of the walls. This rebuilding was accomplished despite considerable odds against it: there was the question whether the Persian king would permit it, as well as the concerted opposition facing Nehemiah in Jerusalem from the Samaritans and the Ammonites. Despite nearly overwhelming difficulties, the rebuilding was completed in fifty-two days, and even Nehemiah’s enemies conceded that the effort was the work of God (6:15–16).

Nehemiah at a Glance

FOCUS	RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL		RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE	
REFERENCE	1:1 _____	3:1 _____	8:1 _____	11:1 _____ 13:31
DIVISION	PREPARATION TO RECONSTRUCT THE WALL	RECONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL	RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT	OBEDIENCE TO THE COVENANT
TOPIC	POLITICAL		SPIRITUAL	
	CONSTRUCTION		INSTRUCTION	
LOCATION	JERUSALEM			
TIME	19 YEARS (444–425 B.C.)			

OUTLINE OF NEHEMIAH

Part One: The Reconstruction of the Wall (1:1–7:73)

- I. The Preparation to Reconstruct the Wall 1:1–2:20**
 - A. Discovery of the Broken Wall 1:1–3
 - B. Intercession of Nehemiah 1:4–2:8
 - C. Arrival of Nehemiah in Jerusalem 2:9–11
 - D. Preparation to Reconstruct the Wall 2:12–20
- II. The Reconstruction of the Wall 3:1–7:73**
 - A. Record of the Builders 3:1–32
 - B. Opposition to the Reconstruction 4:1–6:14
 - C. Completion of the Reconstruction 6:15–19
 - D. Organization of Jerusalem 7:1–4
 - E. Registration of Jerusalem 7:5–73

Part Two: The Restoration of the People (8:1–13:31)

- I. The Renewal of the Covenant 8:1–10:39**
 - A. Interpretation of the Law 8:1–18

B. Reaffirmation of the Covenant 9:1–10:39

II. The Obedience to the Covenant 11:1–13:31

A. Resettlement of the People 11:1–36

B. Register of the Priests and the Levites 12:1–26

C. Dedication of the Jerusalem Wall 12:27–47

D. Restoration of the People 13:1–31

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⁵Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

Class Worksheets ~ Nehemiah Chapters 1&2
May 6th

Research:

What is the time frame for the book of Nehemiah?

What are the two main themes of the book?

Chapter Questions:

1. What was the report Nehemiah heard from brethren who came from Judah?
2. How did Nehemiah react to the report he heard?
3. Both Ezra and Nehemiah quoted scriptures in their recorded prayers, why?
4. What did Nehemiah request of Artaxerxes?
5. What did Nehemiah do when he first arrived in Jerusalem?
6. How did the local gentiles react to the rebuilding effort?
7. Read Ezra 4:7-22, the letters to and from Artaxerxes. It would appear that the letter was sent to Artaxerxes after Ezra returned earlier (Ez 4:12) and the city and wall laid in waste until Artaxerxes sent Nehemiah to rebuild it. The adversaries accused Nehemiah and the Jews of rebelling against the king (Neh 2:19), probably because of the previous letter they received from Artaxerxes.

Application:

How did the Lord accomplish His will in Jerusalem?

Class Worksheets ~ Nehemiah Chapters 3&4
May 13th

Chapter Questions:

1. In chapter 3 we read of all the groups that were rebuilding the wall, what if anything stands out to you?
2. How did the Samaritans and Ammonites feel about the rebuilding?
3. What did the Jews pray for in 4:4-5?
4. What was the attitude of the Jews towards the rebuilding efforts?
5. What did the enemies plot to try and stop the rebuilding?
6. How did the Jews overcome the attempts of their enemies to stop them?

Application:

What can we learn from the Jews ability to overcome their enemies?

Class Worksheets ~ Nehemiah Chapters 5-7
May 20th

Chapter Questions:

1. What is the outcry that comes to Nehemiah's ears?

2. Who is crying out against who?

3. What are the complaints?

4. How does Nehemiah settle the problem?

5. How did Nehemiah govern Judah differently than the former governors?

6. How did the enemies try to stop Nehemiah in chapter 6?

7. How did Nehemiah overcome their efforts?

8. How long did it take to rebuild the wall? What effect did it have on their enemies?

9. After the wall is rebuilt what did Nehemiah want to do?

Application:

What can we learn from how Nehemiah responded to every problem that came up?

Class Worksheets ~ Nehemiah Chapters 8&9
May 27th

Chapter Questions:

1. How did Ezra and the people of Israel respond to the reading of the Law?

2. Why did the leaders declare the day holy?

3. Why were the people of Israel weeping?

4. What specific instructions did the leaders glean from the Book of the Law?

5. How did the Israelites demonstrate their spirit of repentance?

6. What were some of the ways God provided for and protected the people of Israel?

7. How did the people of Israel view God's laws?

8. How did God demonstrate His love for the people of Israel?

9. Why did the Lord allow Israel to be oppressed by their enemies?

Application:

In what ways do you think you should change your attitude toward reading the Bible?

Class Worksheets ~ Nehemiah Chapters 10&11
June 3rd

Chapter Questions:

1. Why did the people separate themselves from their neighbors?
2. With what general oath did the people bind themselves?
3. What were the specifics of the oath between God and the people of Israel?
4. How did the people plan to keep the Sabbath holy?
5. Why did the people establish a tax upon themselves?
6. What responsibility did the people take on to insure that the temple was run properly?
7. Why was it necessary for the people to bring offerings to the temple?
8. How did the people demonstrate their commitment to the Lord and their respect for His temple?
9. What plan was executed to help repopulate the city of Jerusalem?

Application:

How can it be helpful to write a declaration of commitment to God?

Class Worksheets ~ Nehemiah Chapters 12&13
June 10th

Chapter Questions:

1. Why were the Levites sought out and brought to Jerusalem?

2. How did Israel celebrate the completion of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem?

3. How did the people demonstrate their thankfulness to God for His goodness?

4. What did the Israelites discover when they read the Book of Moses at the celebration?

5. What evil deed had Eliashib the priest done?

6. Where was Nehemiah when Eliashib did this?

7. What had forced the Levites to return to their own fields?

8. What request did Nehemiah ask of the Lord for his diligence in keeping Israel accountable?

9. Of what sins were the people of Israel guilty?

10. How did Nehemiah react to Israel's sin of intermarriage with foreigners?

Application:

In what ways do you think Christians today tend to neglect their service to God?

INTRODUCTION TO MALACHI

Malachi, a prophet in the days of Nehemiah, directed his message of judgment to a people plagued with corrupt priests, wicked practices, and a false sense of security. Using the question-and-answer method, Malachi probes deeply into their problems of hypocrisy, infidelity, mixed marriages, divorce, false worship, and arrogance.

For four hundred years after Malachi's ringing condemnations, God remained silent. Only with the coming of John the Baptist (3:1) does God again communicate with His people through a prophet's voice.

Author

The name "Malachi" means "My Messenger." Although some have considered it a title rather than a name, this is unlikely since such a usage would be unique among the prophets. Unknown to us apart from the superscription to this book, Malachi was the last of the Old Testament prophets and the author of this final book of the Old Testament.

Date

Although an exact date cannot be established for Malachi, internal evidence can be used to deduce an approximate date. The use of the Persian term for governor, *pechah* (1:8), indicates that the book was written during the Persian domination of Israel. The temple had been rebuilt, since sacrifices were being offered in the temple (1:7–10). In addition, Malachi's oracle addressed the same problems that Nehemiah faced: corrupt priests (1:6–2:9; cf. Neh. 13:1–9), neglect of tithes and offerings (3:7–12; cf. Neh. 13:10–13), and intermarriage with pagan wives (2:10–16; cf. Neh. 13:23–28). Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. to rebuild the city walls, but returned to Persia in 432 B.C. On his return to Palestine (c. 425 B.C.), Nehemiah dealt with the sins described in Malachi. Thus it is likely that Malachi proclaimed his message while Nehemiah was absent between 432 and 425 B.C.

Themes and Literary Structure

The people of Israel had become disillusioned and doubtful. Internally they wondered if God's messianic promises would ever be fulfilled and whether it was worth serving God after all. Externally, these attitudes were manifested in empty ritual, cheating on tithes and offerings, and indifference to the moral and ceremonial law.

Malachi challenges these problems and attitudes and calls the people to a new commitment and obedience. The book of Malachi may be divided into three main parts: the privilege of the nation (1:1–5), the pollution of the nation (1:6–3:15), and the promise to the nation (3:16–4:6).

Malachi at a Glance

FOCUS	PRIVILEGE OF THE NATION	POLLUTION OF THE NATION		PROMISE TO THE NATION		
REFERENCE	1:1 ———	1:6 ———	2:10 ———	3:16 ———	4:1 ———	4:4 ——— — 4:6
DIVISION	LOVE OF GOD FOR THE NATION	SIN OF THE PRIESTS	SIN OF THE PEOPLE	BOOK OF REMEMBRANCE	COMING OF CHRIST	COMING OF ELIJAH
TOPIC	PAST	PRESENT		FUTURE		
	CARE OF GOD	COMPLAINT OF GOD		COMING OF GOD		
LOCATION	JERUSALEM					
TIME	c. 432–425 B.C.					

OUTLINE OF MALACHI

- I. The Privilege of the Nation 1:1–5**
- II. The Pollution of the Nation 1:6–3:15**
 - A. The Sin of the Priests of Israel 1:6–2:9
 - B. The Sin of the People of Israel 2:10–3:15
- III. The Promises to the Nation 3:16–4:6**
 - A. The Rewards of the Book of Remembrance 3:16–18
 - B. The Rewards of the Coming of Christ 4:1–3
 - C. The Prophecy of the Coming of Elijah 4:4–6

The Coming of Christ

The last two chapters of the last book of the Old Testament contain dramatic prophecies of the coming of the Lord and of John the Baptist. Israel flocked to the Jordan River four hundred years later when “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD’” (Matt. 3:3; cf. Mal. 3:1) appeared, thus breaking the long period of prophetic silence.

The Coming of Christ

Malachi’s Prophecy	Confirmed in the New Testament
As Messenger of the covenant, Christ comes to His temple (3:1) and purifies His people (3:3). His coming brings judgment (4:1).	Christ cleanses the temple (John 2:14-17) and sacrifices His people (Heb. 13:12). Those whose names are not in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).
As the Sun of Righteousness, Christ heals His people (4:2). His forerunner prepares for the coming of the Lord (3:1, 4:5).	Christ heals the multitude; ultimately all sickness will pass away (Matt. 12:15; Rev. 21:4). John the Baptist announces Christ (Matt. 11:10–14).

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⁶Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts : Old and New Testaments.*, Rev. and updated ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

Class Worksheets ~ Malachi Chapters 1&2
June 17th

Chapter Questions:

1. What was the judgment upon Edom?

2. What was God's complaint against Israel?

3. How were the priests involved in defiled offerings to God?

4. What was the attitude of the priests towards God's provisions for them?

5. What was the warning to the priests?

6. How had God's people broken faith with Him?

7. What was the additional evidence of breaking their covenant with God?

8. What is God's view of divorce?

9. How had Israel wearied God?

Application:

Do Christians weary God today? If so, how?

Class Worksheets ~ Malachi Chapters 3&4

June 24th

Chapter Questions:

1. Whom would God send and for what purpose?
2. What warning did God give?
3. What did God require of Israel?
4. How had Israel sinned against God?
5. How was Israel speaking against God?
6. What assurance was given to those who were faithful to the Lord?
7. What promise did God give to His people?
8. What will happen to the wicked in the day of the Lord?
9. What would the day of the Lord hold for God's remnant?
10. What did God promise would happen before the day of the LORD?

Application:

What does the great and dreadful day of the LORD mean?

Between Malachi and Jesus

For Further Study

INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD Interstamental Period. The time between the last of the canonical Old Testament books and the events of the New Testament. Largely corresponds to the Second Temple Period, between the building of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 516 BC and its destruction by the Romans in AD 70. It also may be considered to begin as early as 538 BC, the date of Cyrus' edict for the Jews to return to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2–4; 6:3–5; Isa 44:28).

Introduction

The intertestamental period was a turbulent time of political intrigue (both internal and external) and persecution of the Jews. It deeply shaped the Jewish people. During these years, control of Palestine and the Jewish people shifted from one political power to another, including Persia, Greece (Alexander the Great), Egypt (the Ptolemies), Syria (the Seleucids), and the Maccabees (and the Hasmoneans). The region finally fell under Roman control. Many of the dramatic differences between what it meant to be a Jew in the Old Testament era and what it meant in the New Testament era arose during this period.

Sources

Primary sources for the period are the Apocrypha (mostly 1–2 Maccabees) and the works of the Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37–100). The Dead Sea Scrolls provide some early contemporary manuscripts of the Apocrypha. The ascetic Qumran community composed the Dead Sea Scrolls over a span of about 135 years from 175 BC (or shortly before) to about 40 BC (Burrows, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 123). Though portions of these documents were not completed until later (AD 70 for the Dead Sea Scrolls and AD 93 for Josephus), some of them date to the time between the testaments (Burrows, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 118; Josephus, Wars 1.3 [Whiston]).

This historical period has been the subject of many studies that examine the primary sources in detail. Valuable studies of this period include:

- John Collins and George Sterling's *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, a collection of papers presented at a conference on Hellenism in the land of Israel at the University of Notre Dame and the University of Chicago in April 1999
- Gruen's *Heritage and Hellenism*, in which he dialogues with a broad range of contemporary scholars
- Collins' *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, in which he engages in a discussion of teachings that made up the preaching Jews heard in synagogues
- Tcherikover's *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, in which he presents an extensive discussion of the whole period

Scholarship has also examined the common view that the synagogue originated during the time of the Babylonian captivity—a view that many scholars now consider outdated. In 1970, students of this subject began to seek alternative views (Donald Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period*, 1–22). There is a growing interest in Diaspora Jews in this regard. Studies include:

- Barclay’s comprehensive and multifaceted survey of Diaspora communities and Diaspora literature in *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*)
- Cohen’s analysis of Judaism’s development from the early years of the Roman Empire to the formative period of rabbinic Judaism (Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*)

The Persian Era. At the close of the Old Testament, the Jews were under Persian control, yet they were able to maintain relative autonomy. Thanks to King Cyrus of Persia, the Jews were in their own land (559–529 BC; Ezra 1:1–4) and worshiping freely in the reconstructed temple behind the completed wall of Jerusalem (sanctioned by Darius, 540–486 BC; Ezra 6:1–12).

The Greek Era. When Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) approached Jerusalem during his siege against the Persian Empire, the Jews offered no resistance. Rather, the high priest met Alexander and showed him Daniel’s prophecy predicting that Greece would defeat Medio-Persia (Dan 7:6; 8:3–8, 19–21; 11:3). Alexander claimed that he had dreamed about meeting a person just like the high priest, so he did not destroy Jerusalem (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.144 [Whiston]). Since Alexander had no heir upon his death in 323 BC, four of his generals divided his empire among themselves. Two of these successors figure greatly in the history of the Jews:

1. Ptolemy I (306–283 BC) controlled Egypt, which included Palestine.
2. Seleucus I Nicator (312–280 BC) controlled Syria.

The Ptolemaic Era

Leader	Ruled
Ptolemy I Soter	320–283 BC
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	283–246 BC
Ptolemy III Eurgetes	246–221 BC
Ptolemy IV Philopater	221–204 BC
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	204–181 BC

(Dates are from Bo Reicke, *New Testament*, 46.)

Under the Ptolemies, who ruled Palestine from 320–198 BC, the Jews began to lose their fluency in the Hebrew language. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285–246 BC) commissioned 72 Jewish scholars to translate the Pentateuch into Greek, a translation that became known as the Septuagint. The “Letter of Aristeas” records details of this translation project (Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*), though parts of the account are likely mythological. The Septuagint later lost favor with Jews because the early Christians, including many New Testament writers, used it extensively (Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, 1.23).

The Seleucid Era

Leader	Ruled
Antiochus III the Great	222–187 BC

Seleucus IV Philopater	187–175 BC
Antiochus IV Epiphanes	175–164 BC
Antiochus V Eupator	164–162 BC
Demetrius I	162–150 BC

(Dates are from Bo Reicke, *New Testament*, 50.)

Antiochus III gained control of the Ptolemies' region at the Battle of Panium in 198 BC, ushering in the era of Seleucid control, which would last until 167 BC.

The most extreme of the Seleucids was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whom the Jews called "madman." Under Antiochus' rule, the Jewish high priesthood experienced great instability. In 175 BC, when Antiochus became the ruler of the Seleucid Empire, Jason, the brother of the then high priest Onias III, bribed Antiochus to make him high priest instead of Onias. As high priest, Jason built a gymnasium and aided in Hellenization of the Jews (2 Maccabees 4:7–13). Menelaus, who was not of priestly ancestry, then bribed Antiochus so that he could become high priest in place of Jason. Menelaus had Onias assassinated and was arrested for Onias' murder. Jason subsequently drove out Menelaus and took the office of high priest again. The issue was handled by Syrian rulers (Köstenberger, Kellum and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 69). The Jewish high priesthood's interception with the realm of politics during this period led Jews to suspect the integrity of the priests and whether they may be under the influence of foreign rulers (R.A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of the Second Temple Judea*, 16–22).

During his reign, Antiochus undertook an ambitious program of Hellenizing the Jews (2 Macc 4:9–19). He introduced a law prohibiting various Jewish religious activities on penalty of death, including offering sacrifices in the temple, worshiping on the Sabbath, practicing circumcision, and not eating pork (1 Macc 1:44–50). His harsh restrictions incited the Jews to revolt.

The Maccabean Era

In 167 BC, after refusing to publicly sacrifice a pig to the Greek gods and killing the general who had ordered him to do it, Mattathias and his five sons fled to the countryside, encouraging others (called the Hasidim, "the pious," forerunners of the Pharisees) to join them in fighting Syrian oppression. Following Mattathias' death, his son Judas began a series of successful military raids against the Syrian forces. This success influenced the later Jewish belief that the coming Messiah would be a military leader (Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, 2:323–76; Klausner, *Messianic Idea in Israel*, 19, 392, 506). The celebration of Hanukkah (חנוכה, *chnwkh*; also called the Festival of Lights) originated with an eight-day ceremony to rededicate the temple in Jerusalem, which Antiochus IV had profaned when he sacrificed a pig to Zeus on the altar (Josephus, Ant. 3.192 [Whiston]; 1 Macc 4:36–56; 2 Macc 1:18; Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, et al., *Chanukah*).

Upon Judas' death in 160 BC, his brother Jonathan assumed leadership of the Jews (160–143 BC). During his time in power, Jonathan Maccabee, also called Apphus, "the dissembler" (1 Maccabees. 2:5), was made high priest by Alexander Balas, a Syrian ruler (1 Macc 10: 20; Josephus, Ant. 3.43 [Whiston]). Many Jews considered this appointment "overt corruption of the

priesthood”; the decision contributed to a “problematic status of the temple” in the minds of the Jews, especially the more conservative groups (Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 154). Additionally, the appointment may have contributed to the formation of the Qumran community. It may have been Jonathan Maccabee that they called “the Wicked Priest” (Schürer, *Jewish History in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 2:587).

After Jonathan was killed (1 Macc 12:48), his brother Simon became leader (143–134 BC) (2 Macc 6:18–7:42). The ultimate insult in the minds of the scrupulous members of the Jews was when Simon Maccabee was declared the “supreme leader: High Priest, commander of the armies, and governor of the Jews and the priests” (1 Maccabees 14:25–49). However, the Jewish people themselves, not a foreign power, gave him this position. According to Van Henten, “The people gave their unanimous approval” (1 Macc 14:46; Van Henten, “The Honorary Decree for Simon the Maccabee,” 116–45; Krent, “The Honorary Decree for Simon the Maccabee,” 146–53).

Each of the Maccabees brothers died a violent death, whether on the battlefield or by treachery (Surburg, *Intertestamental Period*, 40). But they made great efforts on behalf of the Jewish people. Judas gained freedom of religion in 162 BC, Jonathan became high priest in 152 BC, and Simon obtained tax exemption in 142 BC (Bo Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 61).

The Hasmonean Era

Leader	Ruled
Hyrchanus I	142–105
Aristobulous I	104
Alexandar Janneus	103–76
Alexandra (queen)	76–67
Hyrchanus II	67
Aristobulus II	66–63

(Dates are from Bo Reicke, *New Testament*, 64.)

In 142 BC Simon Maccabee’s rule came to an end when he, along with nearly his entire family, was assassinated by his son-in-law. Simon Maccabee was succeeded by his sole surviving son, John Hyrcanus, ushering in the era of Hasmonean rule (142–63 BC). Their rule was a time of ruthless family intrigue. Aristobulos I, son of John Hyrcanus, imprisoned his mother and let her die of starvation. He then killed his brother, Antigonus. When Aristobulos died, his widow, Alexandra, married his brother, Alexander Jannaeus (Surburg, *Intertestamental Period*, 41–42).

The rancor between the Pharisees and the Sadducees that is evident in the New Testament is traceable to Hasmonean political manipulation of these two groups during this period. The Hasmoneans favored the politically minded aristocratic Sadducees, who proudly traced their roots to Zadok, the priest in the days of King David (2 Sam 20:25). The Sadducees were a small but influential portion of the Jewish population who accepted, even embraced, the excesses of their politicians. A large number of people denounced them, however, including the Pharisees, who preferred traditional Judaism. The Pharisees (or Hasidim in days of the Maccabees) strongly disapproved of the cruelty and Greek orientation of the Hasmonean rulers (Josephus, Ant. 3.270

[Whiston]). In an extreme response to their disapproval, Jannaeus crucified 800 Pharisees in Jerusalem (Josephus, Ant. 3.266 [Whiston]). Yet before his death, Jannaeus advised his wife, Alexandra, to support the Pharisees and gain the popular support that he did not have.

The Roman Era

Recognizing the growing power of Rome, Antipater, the governor of Galilee, sought foreign assistance to challenge the jurisdiction of Alexandra's son, Aristobulos II (Josephus, Ant. 3.278 [Whiston]). The Roman general Pompey invaded Palestine, subdued the Hasmonean ruler in AD 63, and made Antipater governor of Judaea. Antipater appointed his son, Phasel, military governor of Judaea, and his other son, Herod (Herod the Great, 37–4 BC), tetrarch of Galilee (Josephus, Ant. 3.301 [Whiston]).

In the ensuing international confusion following Julius Caesar's murder in AD 44, Syria unsuccessfully attempted to move into Palestine. Phasel committed suicide while in captivity, and Herod fled to Rome, where he bribed Mark Anthony to appoint him tetrarch of Judaea. Herod was an Idumaeon (i.e., from the line of Esau not Jacob) and, therefore, not a popular choice with the Jews (Josephus, Ant. 3.330 [Whiston]; B.J. 1.54–55 [Whiston]).

After Caesar's nephew Octavian (later called Augustus, "the majestic one") defeated the competing alliance of Cleopatra and Mark Anthony in 31 BC, he solidified his power in Rome. When the New Testament story began, Caesar Augustus was in control of Rome, and Herod held power in Jerusalem (Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 344–45).

Significant Developments for New Testament Studies

The following major issues in the intertestamental period are considered especially relative to New Testaments studies:

- In the Persian era, the Jewish people returned to their land.
- Construction on the second temple was completed in this period.
- In the Ptolemy era, the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint).
- During this period, the position of high priest was bestowed (by a foreign government) to the highest bidder (2 Macc 4:7–13).
- The Seleucid era saw the revolt of the Maccabees. Most significantly, the high priesthood became a political (within the nation of Israel) appointment (1 Macc 14:25–49).
- In the Hasmonean era, serious conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees developed. The Hasmonean rulers used these conflicts for political intrigue.
- Synagogue worship in this period grew in importance, coupled with a lack of integrity in the office of high priest.
- The conflict that raged throughout this period influenced a military concept of the Messiah.
- In the Roman era, Rome appointed Jewish leadership. This was not new, but the extent was pervasive. Roman rule ended with the war that culminated in the destruction of the temple.

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⁷ McCune, Lorne A. "Intertestamental Period." Ed. John D. Barry et al. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* 2012, 2013, 2014 : n. pag. Print.