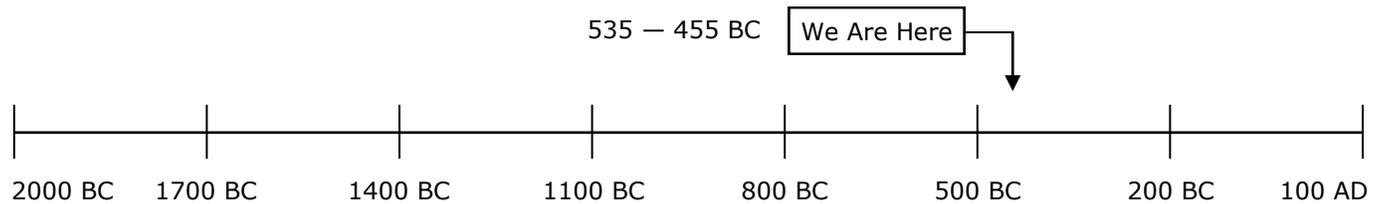


More Than Meets the Eye

BiAY.org | Reviews

Week 37: September 10-16 — *Esther; Haggai; Zech.; Ezra 4-8*

70.6% Complete — 106 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Overview of Bible History (p.37), Babylonian/Persian Rulers (p.73), Map of Persian Empire (p.115)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

Last week, we watched as the Babylonian Empire was absorbed into the new world power, the Medo-Persians. Cyrus, their king, conquered Babylon (539) and was moved by God to release the Jews to return home after 70 years in captivity. The Jews were led by their new Governor, Zerubbabel, and their High Priest, Jeshua; their first priority was to rebuild the Temple. In this week's reading, almost 80 years later (458), the Persian king, Artaxerxes, allowed another group of Jews to return, this time under the leadership of Ezra the priest; his main objective was to renew that generation's commitment to God by teaching them His laws. We also read this week of Esther, who lived during the 80-year gap between the two returns. The book of *Esther* is about the courageous Queen of Persia who happened to be a Jew; she and her cousin Mordecai saved their people from destruction. By God's providence and protection, Esther and Mordecai thwarted Haman, the enemy, and delivered their people.

- Personal Application

1. **Spiritual Warfare:** A serious battle is waging in the backdrop of human history, a battle of good and evil, a battle of two wills, and a battle with contradictory ends. Satan has been and still is bent on the perversion and destruction of God's purposes, and caught in the midst of that epic confrontation are His people. Here are some examples.

Battle for Babylon (*Dan. 10*): We are allowed for a moment to see beyond human sight into the spirit world and learn that there exists a battle over the empires of men.

Temple Trouble (*Ezra 4-6; Haggai 1*): Zerubbabel experienced great opposition when rebuilding the Temple; enemies stood in the way of their worship of God.

The Great Accuser (*Zech. 3:1-10*): Zechariah saw a vision of Satan, our great adversary, accusing Jeshua (and all Jews) of their unworthiness to receive God's favor.

The Race for a Race (*Esther 1-10*): The entire story of Esther is about Satan's attempt, through Haman, to annihilate the Jews; it's always been his plan to destroy God's people.

We must be mindful of our enemy and recognize that he exists; we would be naive to think that we are in some way untouchable. We must be of sober spirit, on the alert, ready for the great lion. We are his opposition and the primary target of his diabolical plans.

2. **Things Are Not What They Seem:** We must practice discernment and recognize that, when it comes to our circumstances, there is more than meets the eye. Satan is at work, attempting to fulfill his purposes. While we only see the physical realm, there is a battle being waged in the spiritual realm.
3. **Providence of God:** Though our Enemy is always attempting to undermine the plan of God, the Lord, in His sovereignty, continues to overrule him and place His people in strategic positions to counter Satan's advances. Thus, we see the incredible providence of God, the fact that He places people in positions for a purpose; He always has His man or woman in place at the right time to carry out His work. Here are some examples.

Daniel: In a terrible time of captivity, under the cruel hand of the Babylonians, God positioned a Jewish man of integrity in the highest pagan offices to impact those in charge.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua: During the first return of the Jews, God placed two leaders before His people, to stand up to the enemies of the day and finish the Temple.

Haggai and Zechariah: When His people needed it most, God sent two prophets to remind them of their spiritual obligations; these men both challenged and encouraged the Jews to rebuild the Temple in the midst of enemy harassment.

Esther and Mordecai: To stand in the way of an evil plan, God positioned a woman and her cousin, who took courageous steps to undermine Haman's plot to kill the Jews.

Ezra: When the people needed someone to teach them God's laws and to lead them to a stronger commitment to His ways, who better than Ezra, a great teacher.

4. **For Such a Time as This:** Does God still place His people in positions for a purpose? Absolutely, and that includes you. You are where you are — family, neighborhood, work place, school, church — for a reason. You are God's ambassador for this time; therefore, you must be faithful to act and speak on His behalf.
- Pictures of Christ
 1. **Triumphal Entry** (*Zech. 9:9*): Pictured here is Christ's humble entrance into Jerusalem.
 2. **Christ Dwelling Among Us** (*Zech. 2:10-13; 9:10, 16*): Jesus in the end times
 - Prophetic Passages
 1. **Desecration of the Temple** (*Dan. 8:14; 11:35-12:13*): Here is a foreshadowing of the abuse of Antiochus Epiphanes concerning the Temple and its eventual cleansing by the Maccabee family during the Inter-testament era. His sacrilegious acts were only a taste of those done by the Anti-Christ in the end.
 2. **Visions of Zechariah** (*Zech. 1:7-6:15*): God gave nine visions to Zechariah for the comfort of the post-exilic remnant.

The Bottom Line

God always has someone, even you, in positions to speak or act *on His behalf*.

Questions to Consider

1. How have you noticed enemy activity in your life? In what ways has he been successful?
2. Looking back, who are people whom God providentially placed to help or influence you?
3. Describe a time when God had you in the right place for a purpose and you knew it.