

CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY ON THE BOOKS OF EZRA AND NEHEMIAH pdf

1: Book of Nehemiah

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A critical and exegetical commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah A critical and exegetical commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah. by Batten, Loring W.

Nehemiah was very depressed about the state of things in his homeland, and could not manage to compose himself any longer in the presence of the great monarch, Artaxerxes. On March 14, B. The Emperor asked Nehemiah to explain why he was so unhappy. Nehemiah asked the Emperor to be released to go head up the rebuilding of his beloved hometown. Nehemiah also requested that letters be sent to the governors of the other lands that he would be traveling through authorizing his passage. When the paperwork was finished and the red tape cut, Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem in Nisan March-April. He arrived in Jerusalem in the fourth month June-July and surveyed the walls at night. Things were in such chaos, he could not afford to let the enemies know what he was about to do. What he found was very disturbing and he called for an immediate public assembly to urge the whole community to do the restoration work. The work on the wall was immediately organized in the fifth month July-August. The work lasted only 52 days, and at first was ridiculed by the enemies, but when finished, the enemies were very agitated and shamed the Jews had been able to complete this important step in securing the city. Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabians, Ammonites and Ashdodites neighbors of Israel heard that the walls were being built. They did everything they could to stop it. It says in Nehemiah 4: And it came to pass from that time forth, that the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers were behind all the house of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon Nehemiah 4: On or about September 10, B. This was an incredible feat, both in being able to do it in such a rapid time, and in being able to do it while armed and having to ward off enemy attack. Nay-sayers want to question the possibility of the Jewish people being able to do this task in so short a time period. However they forget that the Israelites thrust themselves into this work wholeheartedly, and this included those of the whole region, who came together to help the work. Thus there were very many people engaged in the work. Secondly, it was a repair job. Most of the stones were present from being pulled down. While some stones would need replacement, the bulk of the work was close to where it was needed. The stones simply needed to be set back in place. Third, it would be nearly impossible for the Jewish people to abandon their livelihood for a longer period of time and labor under such intense and dangerous conditions. The project had to be organized in such a way the job could be done quickly and efficiently. Fourth, Ezra had been working and undoubtedly had assembled the materials and had some of the work already done. Nehemiah was there to finish the job and to stir a renewed interest and spirit of nationalism. Fifth, getting the job done was considered nothing short of a miracle by the heathen people of the area, and they became discouraged in their efforts to stop the work. And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: On the other hand, the difficulties must be remembered. The work was done in the very hottest months of the year. They were under constant attack, distraction, and ridicule by the heathen people in the area, who did not want the Jewish people to gain a foothold in the land ever again. The walls were extensive, and the lifting of the stones into position is a very difficult and strenuous activity. It has been estimated that 42 work crews would have to complete around 3 or 4 yards of wall a day. Even those working on the walls, clearing rubble and rebuilding had to work armed and ready to defend themselves at any moment. They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded. And he that sounded the trumpet was by me. Sources The original sources were not included in the compiled articles. Baker Book House, , pp. Footnotes click on the number to return to the text [1] Loring W. Willamson, Word Biblical Commentary: Logos

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Second, the rebuke in chapter nine presupposes an understanding of the law, but according to the current order of the text it had not yet been read. First, the MT, Esdras b 2 Esdras, and the Syriac give unanimous testimony to the order of the received text. Second, three fragments from the fourth Qumran cave 4QEzra corroborate the narrative order of the MT in 4: The fourth problem that faces the critic is that the author gives every indication that he knows the proper chronology of the Persian kings. There is, therefore, no reason to believe that he did not know how the pieces of post-exilic history fit together. Conservative commentators of the nineteenth-century are the primary proponents of this approach, though it has not been without support in the twentieth century. Emery, regard both Ahasuerus 4: Those holding the Cambyses-Smerdis view offer several arguments to buttress their position. The most frequently cited support is the claim that Persian rulers often had more than one name. Second, they argue that identifying the Artaxerxes of Ezra 4 with the Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah creates an improbable series of drastic reversals on the part of the Persian monarch: In their commentaries on Ezra, both C. Schultz devote extended sections to refuting the identification of Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes with Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis. For example, he places the return of both Ezra and Nehemiah in the reign of Xerxes and states that Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in the 25th year of Xerxes. There is also a clear change in the object of opposition: From a philological standpoint, H. This common appeal by groups with significantly divergent presuppositions underscores the contention of the previous chapter that chronology functions as a prime ordering principle in the narrative. The author accomplishes this expansion by moving the narrative focus from the temple 4: Further, when referring to the temple in 3: The synonymous interchange of these terms within the very context Eskenazi uses to distinguish them severely undercuts her argument. If Eskenazi were correct, one would expect the distinction between the house of God and the city to blur after Ezra chapter four and the identification of the two to become even clearer in Nehemiah. The fact is, however, that both books maintain a distinction between the city proper and the house of God. Given that the preponderance of the evidence in Ezra and Nehemiah favors distinguishing Jerusalem from the house of God and identifying the temple as the house of God, the one reference which is grammatically ambiguous 3: Ezra deals with all external problems in the first section chs. To date, the theological implications of the chronological displacement of chapters for the message of the book as a whole remain undeveloped. The analysis proposed here extends the observations of Kidner and Williamson in particular. Aided by the generality of his temporal markers 4: It also supplies background information that will support the severe measures Ezra takes at the end of the book. Their whim rules the world, but He controls their whims. In this way the text generates hope in the original reader for the future. At the same time the narrative offers hope, it is also setting the stage to explain why the people have faced this recent setback. Temporal Proportioning in Ezra Temporal proportioning in a narrative involves three elements: Where Ezra ends is a different matter. Two aspects of his choice of an ending point mark it as irregular: The entire second section occurred before the events of Ezra 4: The anachronous placement of Ezra argues that Ezra intends these events to conclude his narrative message. The narrator seems to walk off stage with the last of the women and children, leaving the reader contemplating the significance of the final scene. One might expect an even distribution of those years across the ten chapters of his narrative; however, that is not the case. This disproportionate division of time across his narrative draws attention to the final section. Any narrative involves at least two dimensions of time. The first is the actual amount of time it takes to read the narrative, and the second is the amount of time in minutes, days, months, or years that the narrative covers. Internal time and external time match stride in four types of material in Ezra: The letters of Rehum 4: The decrees of Cyrus

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1: The confession of the princes 9: His point is as theologically charged as his prayer. Participation in that blessing is contingent upon meeting the conditions God has established for granting the blessing. While purity of liturgy is important, purity of life is all important. God will not bless those who abandon Him. They work in conjunction with a whole array of other narrative forces. And it is to those forces that the following two chapters devote their attention. Helpful listings of relevant bibliography may be found in H. The Westminster Press, , ; Peter R. SCM Press, , 24; N. For a rapid survey of the historical development of this issue, see McFall , Rowley listed more than 20 critical scholars who defend the traditional order of Ezra preceding Nehemiah Inter-Varsity Press, , The Tyndale Press, For more expansive treatments, see Edwin M. Though defending the traditional view, Kellermann argues from source-critical considerations that place him at odds with most conservative scholars. Concerning the two other references to Ezra in Nehemiah A more interesting question raised by Demsky is why no mention is made of Ezra participating in the wall-building effort of Nehemiah. For further treatment of this question, see Kidner , It by no means implies that Ezra had not been diligently teaching the law to smaller groups of disciples and Levites during the preceding twelve years. Moody Press, , Clarendon Press, , The papyrus gives the date of its composition as in the 17th year of Darius II. Rowley, following Josephus XI. Rowley supports his contention with an unattested conjectural emendation of Jonathan the son of Joiada Neh. Kaiser , on the other hand, accepts Jonathan as a variant spelling of Jehohanan. He regards the identification of Eliashib Ezra David Suiter suggests that, since Ezra He bases this suggestion on the high frequency of papponymy in the Samaria papyri. Unfortunately, the absence of any supporting textual or versional data leaves this suggestion without an adequate basis for acceptance, despite its attractiveness. For a more text-based solution, see Benjamin E. Part of it is found in one place and part in another. Moreover, the two principal fragments, thus separated from each other, are incoherent in themselves. The sequence of the several scenes is plainly out of order; the chronology is all wrong; and the bearing of the successive? Ktav Publishing House, Inc. Torrey represents the most radical views in critical Ezra scholarship. He denies that the person Ezra ever existed Clark, , George Arthur Buttrick New York: Abingdon, , 3: Pfeiffer bluntly states that Ezra 4: The Chronicler erroneously confuses the opposition to the building of the city walls with the opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple at a much earlier date. The Chronicler misunderstood these texts and placed them in the wrong context. Les ditions du Cerf, , 14, cited in Myers , xlv. Mohr, , xxii. Snaith assigns the sections he omits to later hands. The Westminster Press, , Even critics who maintain the Biblical order of Ezra and Nehemiah base their position on equally subjective reasons. More cogent are considerations rising from the fact that the practical administrator Nehemiah would be needed to straighten out the failure of the impractical scribe Ezra, rather than vice versa. It is tempting to transpose this section to follow 3: The narrative repeatedly notes the carefulness of the post-exilic community in following the law 3: Eugene Ulrich, et al. Sheffield Academic Press, , Perhaps most noteworthy in this regard is the fact that the text preserved on the fragment of 4: However, the order of 1 Esdras is, as H. Thomas Nelson and Sons, ,

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