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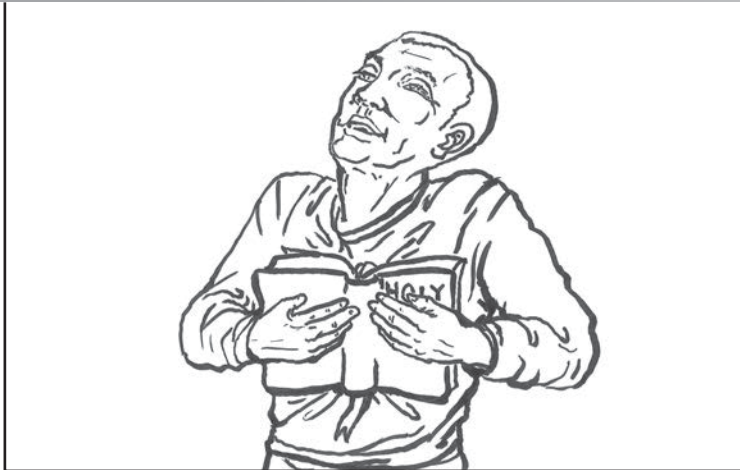
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## Introduction



## The Good News About Jesus From the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah

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**E**zra and Nehemiah are special men. They put God first in their lives. They obey Bible truth. The Holy Spirit is with them. These leaders deeply want God's people to be a success. They also want to honor God's name in front of all the people on the earth. Ezra's and Nehemiah's lives are examples of what God can do when we give our lives to Him fully. Then God will make us strong servant leaders.

We are sinners. We have evil habits. Our parents gave us bad habits too. So, we can change only with the Holy Spirit's help and with our study of the Bible. As Christians, we must follow the truth in Zechariah 4:6. This verse tells us, " "Your help will not come from your own strength and power. No, your help will come from my Spirit" ' ' (Zechariah 4:6, ERV). So, we must believe God's promises (Habakkuk 2:4). Then our spiritual lives will be strong with God's power.

This quarter's Bible study guide shows us that life can be hard at times. When we try to do good things, bad things happen. Or troubles show up. Even friends may stand in the way of our success. They even may become our enemies. All these troubles show us that Satan is alive, and sin is real. We cannot fight Satan. He is stronger than we are. Only God can beat Satan. God also can change our thinking. He can give us the power to live healthy lives. When bad things happen, please remember something: God uses problems and hard times to help us grow. God also can use troubles and problems to change our lives for the better. He will help us win the war against every problem we have. We win the war because of His power.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah do not have a happy ending. Sin is a big problem. It spreads easily and fast. The biggest problem that God's people have is in our hearts. We are not loyal to God. We do not obey His law as we should. What was the biggest test for God's people in the past? What about today? It is hard for us to obey the Lord and His law. Ezra understands this problem. He knows that God changes us when we study the Bible. So, we must study carefully. We must make the Bible a part of our lives every day. Then God's Word will become part of our hearts and minds too. We must live with God's Word in us.

God keeps His promises to the Jews to help them rebuild the city. We can read about the promises that God gives His people in His special time messages or prophecies. They are named the "70-week prophecy" and the "2,300-day prophecy." Both of these special time messages start in 457 B.C. At that time, King Artaxerxes the 1st lets Ezra and a group of

Jews go back to Jerusalem. God touches on the king's heart to help the Jews. So the king keeps the Jews safe. The king also provides God's people with food. He gives them gifts for the temple too (Ezra 7:11–28).

What are three important ideas in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah? (1) We see the wonderful ways that God works to help His people. (2) We see that God keeps His promises. (3) We also learn about God's Covenant or Special Agreement with His people. God's people are stubborn. Satan leads them away from God very easily. Sin often takes the people's minds and hearts away from God. But God does not give up on His people. He chooses Ezra and Nehemiah to lead His people back to Him.

“God chooses Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to do special work. These leaders help rebuild Jerusalem. They help God's people make changes for a better life. The work these leaders do is a word picture. It shows us the spiritual work that God wants to do in us in the end times. He wants to make us new. The Jews who go back to Judah are weak. Their enemies hurt them. But God has a plan for His people. God wants the Jews to keep the knowledge about God and His law alive on the earth. God gives His people the job to protect His law. His people also protect true worship on the earth.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, page 677, adapted.

**God's truth  
must live in us.**

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah share the same history. Together, they tell us about an important time in the history of God's people. These two books together have 23 chapters. The 23 chapters form one big story. This big story has many smaller stories in it. The smaller stories talk about the same spiritual problems. As we study these smaller parts and ideas, we can see God's loving favor. We see that God loves His people so much. He is a wonderful and kind Leader.

There is some important information that we want you to hold in your mind while you read. The stories in Ezra 4:6–24 happen **after** the stories in Ezra 5 and Ezra 6, even if Ezra 4 comes first. If you remember this, it will help you not to get confused when you read.

As we will see, Ezra and Nehemiah's biggest problem is **not** rebuilding the temple. The people finish rebuilding the temple and then give it to God in 515 B.C. That happens more than 50 years before Ezra comes to Jerusalem. The biggest problem the two leaders have is rebuilding the city and making Judah a powerful country again. All this work is important. It will lead to the coming of the promised Savior.

When we study the Bible this quarter, we must ask for the Lord to bless us. We pray that He will give us hope. We ask that He will touch our hearts with His message. We pray for Him to change our thinking. Then we can follow Him every day with faith and joy.

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