

**EZRA, NEHEMIAH**  
*and*  
**ESTHER**

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**BIBLE STUDY TEXTBOOK SERIES**

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**EZRA**  
*and*  
**NEHEMIAH**

*by*  
Ruben Ratzlaff

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**ESTHER**

*by*  
Paul T. Butler

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## Preface for Ezra and Nehemiah

This book is prepared with the interested Bible School teacher, church leader, Bible College student, or minister especially in mind. Its purpose is to make the content of Ezra and Nehemiah more practically useful to the church of today, and the people and events of Ezra-Nehemiah more understandable and contemporary to our culture.

As to the format, the questions at the beginning of each chapter are of a discussion nature; read them, then look for answers in the Bible text, the comments, or in your own judgment. There may not be hard and fast answers for every one of them. The outline will seek to call attention to the major topic or topics of the chapter, and to break each chapter down into small enough units to observe the development of ideas. The text itself is from the New American Standard Bible; we make no effort to evaluate which is the best translation available today, but we have observed that the NASB is widely used among the readers for which this book is designed. Some use of the Hebrew text is made in the preparation of the comments, but the only use of the Hebrew will be in English transliteration in the Word Studies when it is deemed helpful to the reader. It is hoped that the Word Studies may spark an idea for development in teaching or exposition, or may clarify some symbol in the text itself; they are not all at the same stage of development. The summary hopefully will put each chapter into focus so that its whole message can be seen in one overview. The questions at the end of the chapters are of a factual nature, to test recall.

This book is being written from a position of faith. It is the author's conviction that the history described in the Bible text was a part of the whole fabric of events and visitations by which God was revealing Himself and preparing a people for the coming of His Son.

Questions relating to the authorship of this material, insofar as they seek to go beyond what is made known in the text, have their importance (an educated person will have his curiosities), but are second to the content of the message itself. We have found that it is impossible, in the first place, to speak with certainty beyond what His Spirit has chosen to reveal; we have,

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secondly, found little spiritual or practical nourishment in these questions and suspect that the Spirit made a wise choice of what to include and what not to include.

It is hoped that this book will make a contribution to our total knowledge of Bible truth and of God's ways of working with His children, that our lives might be improved by seeing more of the details of our possible fellowship with and service for Him.