

Chronology of the time of Ezra–Nehemiah

539 BC	King Cyrus of Medo-Persia conquers Babylon (Dan 1:21)
538 BC	King Cyrus allows the Jews to return to Judah and allows them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (1 Chron 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–6; 6:3). The first group of Jews (around fifty thousand) under the leadership of Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah (perhaps the same person as Zerubbabel, the main leader of the Jews) return (Ezra 1–2).
537 BC	The altar for burnt offerings is built (Ezra 3:1). Jeshua is priest (Ezra 3:2).
536–530 BC	The rebuilding the Jerusalem temple is started under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the grandson of king Jehoiachin of Judah, who was the governor of the colony (Ezra 3:8). But opposition from non-Jews stops the building work (Ezra 4:1–5).
520–516 BC	The building of the temple is resumed at the beginning of the reign of king Darius of Persia (Ezra 4:5, 24; Haggai 1:14–15). The prophets Haggai and Zechariah minister in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Four years later, the temple is finally completed and dedicated (Ezra 6:15–16).
483–473 BC	The story of Esther, the Jewish queen of king Xerxes of Persia (called Ahasuerus in the Kannada Bible translations), takes place in Susa, the summer capital of the Medo-Persian Empire. Esther is, however, not mentioned in Ezra–Nehemiah.
458 BC	Ezra the scribe leaves Babylon and arrives in Jerusalem in the seventh year of the reign of king Artaxerxes of Persia (Ezra 7:1–9).
444 BC	Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer, leaves Susa and arrives in Jerusalem in the twentieth year of the reign of king Artaxerxes (Neh 1–2:11). Under his leadership the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt in 52 days (Neh 2:13–6:15) and dedicated (Neh 12:27–43). A public assembly takes place under the leadership of Nehemiah, the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe. Ezra reads the Book of the Law of Moses (Neh 7:73–8:12). Then the Feast of Tabernacles is celebrated (Neh 8:13–18), followed later that month by a day of fasting (Neh 9) which includes “promises” (Neh 10; perhaps a renewal of the covenant).
433 BC	Nehemiah is recalled to Babylon/Persia by king Artaxerxes in the thirty-second year of his reign (Neh 5:14; 13:6).
Around 430 BC?	The prophet Malachi ministers in Jerusalem, but he is not mentioned in Ezra–Nehemiah.
430 BC?	Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem; his final reforms (Neh 13:6–31).

Kings of Persia during the time of Ezra–Nehemiah

559–530 BC	Cyrus the Great (mentioned in 2 Chron 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–8; Isaiah 45:1)
530–522 BC	Cambyses (not mentioned in the Bible)
522–486 BC	Darius I, called the Great (mentioned in Ezra 4:5, 24; 5:5–7; 6:1–15; Haggai 1:1; 2:1, 10, 18; Zech 1:1, 7; 7:1)
486–465 BC	Xerxes/Ahasuerus (mentioned in Ezra 4:6; the book of Esther)
465–424 BC	Artaxerxes I (mentioned in Ezra 4:7–23; 7:1–8; Nehemiah 2:1–8; 5:14; 13:6)