

NEHEMIAH

PURPOSE: God was faithful toward the exiles. Many people were used to help them, to deliver them and to restore them. Specifically, Nehemiah's prayer, patience, patriotism, courage, leadership, and selflessness were vital and qualities to be imitated.

Memory verses: Nehemiah 6:15, 16 & 8:8

So, the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty and two days. 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: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading

INTRODUCTION:

Nehemiah means 'consolated by God'. It had been hundreds of years since the Jews entered their own land, Jerusalem. After rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, the Jews gradually acquired prosperity. The city of Jerusalem still remained as a city without walls. The opposition and accusations were great against the building of the wall of Jerusalem. However, the Kings of Persia were more lenient towards the Jews of Jerusalem than the Kings of Babylon. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes. Queen Esther was the wife of Xerxes, the father of King Artaxerxes.

Her influence and authority also came in favour toward the people of Jerusalem. The trustworthy cupbearer Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem as an authoritative figure (governor), with an order to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Prayer, patience, modesty/humbleness, courage, leadership and or loyalty toward one's own land or country are all necessary aspects one needs to have in possession to be on such a mission. After four months of fasting, praying and knowing what God had placed in his heart, Nehemiah decided to present and expound on his mission in the presence of the king. (Four months from Kislev to Nisan).

Jewish months:

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| 1. Tishre | 7. Nisan |
| 2. Heshvan | 8. Sivan |
| 3. Kislev | 9. Iyar |
| 4. Tebeth | 10. Tammuz |
| 5. Shebat | 11. Ab |
| 6. Adar | 12. Elul |

(Jewish temple calendar Nisan (Abib) is considered as first month of the year) Ezra and Nehemiah lived in the same time period. Nehemiah and his people remained in Babylon till the end of captivity. Despite opposition and accusations from within and outside the group, the wall of Jerusalem was built and completed within fifty-two remarkable days. The Jewish people grew spiritually and in other ways during this period of opposition. Nehemiah remained the governor in Jerusalem from 444 B.C to 432 B.C. The Hebrew name for this book is Nehemia. When Ezra and Nehemiah were considered one book in Greek, they started referring it as *Esdras Deuteron*. In Latin, it received the name *Liber Secundus Ezras* meaning, the second book of Ezra. Eventually, it was called *Liber Nehemiah*, the book of Nehemiah.

AUTHOR

It is very clear that the majority of this book is written from the memory of Nehemiah (Nehemiah 1:1, 7:5, 12:27-43, 13:4-31). It can therefore be concluded that this book is solely written by Nehemiah himself.

Nevertheless, there is evidence that points toward Ezra as possible author of this book as well. (Nehemiah 7:6, 12:26, 12:44). There are people who believe that Ezra gathered Nehemiah's diary writings and letters and then wrote the book. Nehemiah 7:5-73 and Ezra 2:1-70 give the impression that someone recollected or gathered the information from other manuscripts or documents.

PERIOD OF WRITING

There were two Kings during that period in which Ezra was written. It was written during the time of King Artaxerxes 1(464-422 B.C.). Esther was the stepmother of King Artaxerxes.

HISTORY OF THE PERIOD

Nehemiah came from Babylon to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. Until B.C. 425, he stayed in Jerusalem. It's believed that 19 years' worth of history is part of this book.

CHRIST IN THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Ezra and Nehemiah show their mission for restoration. Just as Nehemiah sacrificed his high status and position to serve his people, Christ Jesus came down to this sinful world as a man sacrificing his Godliness and His holiness to save people from eternal damnation. Just as Nehemiah took the responsibility and accomplished everything, Christ finished everything that God the Father wanted Him to do. Nehemiah restored everything except the King, however one can see the shadow of the Messiah in this book.

MAIN TOPIC

The rebuilding of the temple, followed by the purification of the people, the rebuilding of the walls and the third wave of returning exiles are the main topics of this book.

OBSERVATION ABOUT THE BOOK

Nehemiah's mission has a very close relationship and bonding with Ezra's mission. While Ezra deals with religious restoration of Judah, Nehemiah is primarily concerned with political and geographical restoration. Ezra and Nehemiah combine to make an effective team in rebuilding the post exilic remnant. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, also ministers during this time to provide additional moral and spiritual direction. There are two major divisions (1) the reconstruction of Wall (1-7), (2) the restoration of the people (8-13).

REBUILDING OF THE WALL OF JERUSALEM

Nehemiah's love and care toward Jerusalem and his own people, made him take some bold steps. The wall of Jerusalem was destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. And later in 464 B.C. with the order from the ruler of Persia King Artaxerxes 1 (Ezra 4:6-23), the wall was rebuilt. However, during the time of opposition and accusations Nehemiah prayed to the God to receive the order, protection and assistance from King Artaxerxes to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

The return of the exiles under the provision of Nehemiah took place in 444 B.C. This was thirteen years after the return of the exiles under the provision of Ezra and ninety-four years after the return of exiles under the provision of Zerubbabel. After inspecting the wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah told people "Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18). Work began immediately on the wall and its gates, with people building portions corresponding to where they were living. When they saw that the work was improving greatly and going forward and the breaches were beginning to close, the surrounding people became very angry. Opposition first arose in the form of mockery against the people of Jerusalem, and thereafter they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem.

Nehemiah overcame this by preparing half of his servants to work on construction while the other half held spears and bows. Nehemiah had to face trouble and inconvenience within and outside of Jerusalem. Instead of the rich Jewish leaders in Jerusalem helping their Jewish brothers, they were exploiting the poor. The wealthier Jews were taking advantage of the poorer Jews. Due to their participation in this battle, their everyday living expenses were no more. The rich abused and oppressed the poor by forcing them to mortgage their property and by saying that everything they had including their children would be enslaved under them. Everyone was affected by the famine and exploitation. Nehemiah prayed and God heard his prayers and resolved his problems. He distributed whatever he had with him to all his brothers in need and rescued all those who were under the intimidation of the rich through prayer and action. Nehemiah and his people finished the wall in 52 days. When all their enemies heard of this, they were afraid and perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of God (Neh. 6:16).

RESTORATION OF PEOPLE

After the building of the wall, Nehemiah started the work again for spiritual unity of the people of Jerusalem. Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform and deliberated the Law of Moses which

