

A LOOK AT THE BOOK NEHEMIAH

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Author and date

Much of the material gives evidence of authorship by Nehemiah himself. The primary evidence is the use of the first person throughout the account (1:1-7:5; 12:27-43; 13:4-31). Other portions parallel Ezra's style, or documents he may have used for his accounts (7:6-12:26; 12:44-13:3). Many people believe Nehemiah wrote from his own experience and then compiled the second set of passages from other available documents.

Ezra and Nehemiah were originally presented as one book. This union was probably based on their contemporaneous character and common message, rather than on a common author.

The events of Nehemiah occur between 444 B.C., when Nehemiah prepared to lead the third expedition back to Jerusalem, and about 425 B.C., when he returned on a second mission. The book was probably written at about that time.

Background

Nehemiah's story begins about 13 years following Ezra's return to Jerusalem.

- The people had been back in the land for about 92 years.
- The temple had been rebuilt.
- The people had experienced a spiritual revival in 458 B.C. under Ezra.

Nehemiah 1:3 indicates recent damage may have been done to the walls of Jerusalem. The report of the condition of the walls motivated Nehemiah to action.

Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer, a trusted confidant. Artaxerxes was willing to permit reconstruction of the walls, knowing Nehemiah would be in control. The king named him governor and gave him authority to lead the physical and moral reconstruction. Therefore, he led the third group back in 444 B.C.

His second journey may have been contemporary with the ministry of Malachi; they address many of the same problems.

Purpose and theme

The most obvious *historical* purpose of Nehemiah is to describe the circumstances related to the third return to Jerusalem in 444 B.C. Events include the reconstruction of the walls which provide some security to the people, as well as political and moral reconstruction.

It also *demonstrates God's involvement in the restoration of His people*. He controls history and even uses pagan kings to bring about His purposes. He brought His people back to the land to reestablish them.

Before God's plan can be fully realized, they must recognize His holiness and live holy lives, separated from their pagan neighbors. Blessing will come on the basis of their faith and obedience. If they are disobedient, they will again be judged.

Nehemiah *describes the kind of leader God is able to use to accomplish His purposes*. Nehemiah's character, and his activities as a leader, direct our attention to *the characteristics God seeks and blesses in those who serve Him*.

Application to our life today

What do God's dealings with Israel teach us about what He wants from His people?
What do we learn about godly leadership from observing Nehemiah's character and lifestyle?
What difference should this study make in your life?
What do you plan to do about it?

NEHEMIAH

THE REBUILDING OF JERUSALEM

Ralph Porter

PHYSICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY			1-7		SPIRITUAL RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT		8-13	
PREPARATION FOR RE-CONSTRUCTION	PROCESS OF RECON-STRUCTION	PERFECTION OF RECONSTRUCTION	RECONFIRMATION OF COVENANT	REFORMATION OF ABUSES				
1-2	3-6:14	6:15-7:73	8-10	11-13				
<p>His Province with its Trouble 1:1-3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The commission 1-2 The condition 3</p> <p>His Prayer to the Lord 1:4-11a</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Grief 4 Worship 5 Confession 6-7 Appeal to covenant 8-10 Petition 11a</p> <p>His Petition to the King 1:11b-2:8</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Petition made 11b-2:5 Petition granted 2:6-8</p> <p>His Preview of the Situation 2:9-16</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Presentation to local officials 9 Discontent by local officials 10 Survey of local conditions 11-16</p> <p>His Presentation of the Plan 2:17-20</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Plan adopted 17-18 Plan opposed 19 Plan assured 20</p>	<p>Division of Responsibilities 3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Sheep Gate to Fish Gate 1-2 Fish Gate to Old Gate 3-5 Old Gate to Valley Gate 6-12 Valley Gate to Dung Gate 13 Dung Gate to Fountain Gate 14 Fountain Gate to Horse Gate 15-27 Horse Gate to Sheep Gate 28-32</p> <p>Difficulties in Rebuilding 4-6:14</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">External obstacles 4</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Ridicule 1-6 Conspiracy 7-23</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Internal obstacle 5</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Strife over economic conditions 1-5 Self-denial by leaders 6-13 Self-denial by Nehemiah 14-19</p> <p>Personal obstacles 6:1-14</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Temptation to confer 1-9 Temptation to flee 10-14</p>	<p>Completion of Wall 6:15-19</p> <p>Charge for Leaders 7:1-4</p> <p>Collection of Genealogies 7:5-69</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Genealogy gathered 7:5-7 Genealogy recounted 7:8-69</p> <p>Contributions for Work 7:70-72</p> <p>Conclusion of Work 7:73</p>	<p>Reading of the Law 8</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Instruction from the law 1-8 Celebration of joy 9-12 Construction of booths 13-17 Continuation of reading 18</p> <p>Repentance of the People 9:1-37</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Separation and confession 1-4 Praise to the Lord 5-15 Because of His creation 5-6 Because of His covenant 7-8 Because of His deliverance 9-12 Because of His revelation 13-15 Confession of national failure 16-37</p> <p>Restoration of the Covenant 9:38-10:39</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Signing of agreement 9:38-10:27 Acceptance of agreement 10:1-28-29a Contents of agreement 10:29b-39</p>	<p>Settlement of the Cities 11</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Inhabitants of Jerusalem 1-19 Basis of selection 1-4a Results of selection 4b-19 Inhabitants of other cities 20-36</p> <p>Identification of Priests and Levites 12:1-26</p> <p>Dedication of the Walls 12:27-13:3</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Gathering and purification of the people 12:27-30 Appointment of two choirs 13:1-43 Appointment over storerooms for contributions 12:44-47 Separation from foreigners 13:1-3</p> <p>Later Reforms 13:4-31</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Concerning the temple 13:4-14 Removal of Tobiah's storeroom 4-9 Restoration of tithes 10-14 Concerning the Sabbath 13:15-22 Concerning intermarriage 13:23-31 Prohibition of intermarriage 23-37 Removal of priest 28-31</p>				