

Nehemiah

MEANING: Nehemiah means “Comfort of Yawheh.”

AUTHOR: Most likely Nehemiah

TIME WRITTEN: Nehemiah and Ezra both share the same historical background. Nehemiah leaves Persia in the 20th year of Artaxerxes (2:1), returns to Persia in the 32nd year of Artaxerxes (13:6) and leaves again for Jerusalem “after certain days” (13:6) perhaps about 425 B.C. The Book of Nehemiah could not have been completed until after his second visit to Jerusalem.

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 16th Book in the Bible
- 16th book in the Old Testament
- 11th of 12 books of History
- 15 have preceded it. 50 to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 13

VERSES: 406

WORDS: 10,483

KEY WORD: The Wall of Jerusalem

TWO KEY PASSAGES:

1. **Nehemiah 6:15-16** - the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days.

And it happened, when all our enemies heard of it, and all the nations around us saw these things, that they were very disheartened in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was done by our God.

2. **Nehemiah 8:8** - So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading. (They helped them to understand the reading)

KEY CHAPTER: Nehemiah 9

1. Nehemiah 9 records that upon the completion of the Jerusalem wall, the nation reaffirmed its loyalty to the covenant.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT NEHEMIAH:

1. While Ezra deals with the religious restoration of Judah, Nehemiah is primarily concerned with Judah’s political and geographical restoration.
2. The first seven chapters are devoted to the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem was the spiritual and political center of Judah, without walls it could hardly be considered a city at all.

3. The Book of Nehemiah takes us to the end of the historical account in the Old Testament, about four hundred years before the birth of the promised Messiah (Jesus Christ).
4. As cupbearer to Artaxerxes, Nehemiah holds a position of great responsibility.
 - a. His role is tasting the King's wine to prevent him from being poisoned places Nehemiah in a position of trust and confidence as one of the King's advisors.
 - b. As governor of Jerusalem from 444 B.C. to 432 B.C. (14 years), Nehemiah demonstrates:
 0. Courage.
 0. Compassion for the oppressed
 0. Integrity
 0. Godliness
 0. Selflessness
5. Like Moses approximately 1,000 years earlier, he is willing to give up the luxury and ease of the palace to help his people. He is a dedicated layman who:
 - a. Has the right priorities and is concerned with God's work.
 - b. Is able to encourage and rebuke at the right times.
 - c. Is strong in prayer.
 - d. Gives all glory and credit to God.
6. Malachi lives and minister during Nehemiah's time.
 - a. A comparison of the books of Nehemiah and Malachi shows that many of the evils encountered by Nehemiah are specifically denounced by Malachi.
 - b. The coldhearted indifference toward God described in both books remains a problem in Israel during the four hundred years before Christ in which there is no revelation from God (The 400 year Intertestamental Period between the Old Testament and the New Testament).
7. In the Book of Nehemiah, everything is restored except the king.
 - a. The temple is rebuilt.
 - b. Jerusalem is reconstructed.
 - c. The covenant is renewed.
 - d. The people are reformed.
 - e. The Messianic is intact, but the king is yet to come. The next King will be The Messiah, Jesus Christ some four centuries (400 years)later.

SUMMARY OF NEHEMIAH

INTRODUCTION:

A. Ezra and Nehemiah combine to make an effective team in rebuilding the postexilic remnant..

1. Ezra is a priest who brings spiritual revival.
2. Nehemiah is a governor who brings physical reconstruction and leads the people in moral reform.
3. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, also ministers during this time to provide additional moral and spiritual direction.

B. There are two major divisions in the book:

1. The Reconstruction of the Wall (1-7)
2. The Restoration of the People (8-13)

THE RESTORATION OF THE TEMPLE. (1-6)

A. The wall around Jerusalem had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

1. The return under Nehemiah in 444 B.C. takes place thirteen years after the return under Ezra, and ninety-four years after the return of Zerubbabel.
2. Nehemiah inspects the walls and challenges the people to “rise up and build” (2:18)
3. Work begins immediately on the wall and its gates, with people building portions corresponding to where they are living.

B. However, opposition quickly arises.

1. The opposition comes in two forms:
 - a. First in the form of mockery.
 - b. Next in the form of conspiracy when the work is progressing at an alarming rate.
2. Nehemiah overcomes threats of force by setting half of the people on military watch and half on construction.
3. While the external opposition continues to mount, internal opposition also surfaces.
 - a. The wealthier Jews are abusing and oppressing the people in two major ways.
 1. By forcing them to mortgage their property.
 2. By forcing them to sell their children into slavery.
 - b. Nehemiah again deals with this problem by :
 1. The twin means of:
 - a. Prayer.
 - b. Action.
 2. He also leads by example
4. In spite of deceit, slander, and treachery, Nehemiah continues to trust in God and to press on with singleness of mind until the work is completed.

The task is completed in an incredible fifty-two days, and even the enemies recognize that it can only have been accomplished with the help of God (6:16).

THE RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE (8-18)

- A. The construction of the walls is followed by consecration and consolidation of the people.
 - 1. Ezra the priest is the leader of the spiritual revival (8-10), reminiscent of the forms he led thirteen years earlier (Ezra 9-10).
 - a. Ezra stands on a special wooden podium after the completion of the walls and gives the people a marathon reading of the law, translating from the Hebrew into Aramaic so they can understand.
 - b. The people responded with:
 - 1. Weeping.
 - 2. Confession.
 - 3. Obedience.
 - 4. Rejoicing.
 - c. The Levites and priests lead them in a great prayer that:
 - 1. Surveys God's past work of deliverance and loyalty on behalf of His people.
 - 2. Magnifies God's attributes of:
 - a. Holiness.
 - b. Justice.
 - c. Mercy.
 - d. Love.
 - 3. The covenant is then renewed with God as the people commit themselves to:
 - a. Separate from the Gentiles in marriage .
 - b. To obey God's commandments.
- B. Lots are drawn to determine who will remain in Jerusalem and who will return to the cities of their inheritance.
 - 1. One-tenth are required to stay in Jerusalem.
 - 2. The remainder of the land is resettled by the people and priests.
- C. The walls of Jerusalem are dedicated to the Lord in a joyful ceremony.
- D. Nehemiah makes a 2nd trip to Jerusalem.
 - 1. Unfortunately, Ezra's revival is short-lived; and Nehemiah, who returned to Persia in 432 B.C. (13:6), makes a second trip to Jerusalem about 425 B.C. to reform the people.
 - 2. He does three major things:
 - a. He cleanses the temple.
 - b. He enforces the Sabbath.
 - c. He requires the people to put away all foreign wives.