

# Nehemiah

Dr. Andy Woods

# Introductory Matters

- Title
- Authorship
- Biography
- Scope
- Date
- Place of writing
- Audience
- Occasion
- Purpose
- Message
- Structure
- Historical background
- Distinctives
- Christ in Nehemiah

# Title

- Hebrew: *Nehemyah*
- LXX: First Esdras = Apocryphal Book of Esdras, Second Esdras = Ezra–Nehemiah
- Vulgate: First Book of Ezra = Ezra, Second Book of Ezra = Nehemiah
- English: Nehemiah

# Authorship

- Much of the book came from Nehemiah's personal memoirs
  - Opening verse (1:1)
  - Vivid accounting (1:1–7:5; 12:27-43; 13:4-31)
- Options
  - Nehemiah wrote all of it
  - An anonymous writer compiled it through the assistance of personal memoirs compiled by both Ezra and Nehemiah
  - Ezra wrote some of it (7:6–12:26; 12:44–13:3) and compiled the rest through Nehemiah's personal memoirs

# Nehemiah's Biography

- Born in Persia
- Son of Hacaliah and brother of Hanani (1:1-2)
- Little else is known of him
- Cup bearer (1:11)
- Positive character attributes displayed throughout the book
- Appointed by Artaxerxes to lead the third return, rebuild Jerusalem's wall, and become Jerusalem's governor (5:14; 8:9; 10:1; 13:6)

# Persian Kings

- Cyrus (559–530 B.C.)
- Cambyses (530–522 B.C.)
- Smerdis (522 B.C.)
- Darius I (521–486 B.C.)
- Xerxes I (Ahasuerus)-(486–465 B.C.)
- Artaxerxes I (464–424 B.C.)
- Darius II (423–404 B.C.)
- Artaxerxes II (404–359 B.C.)

# Three Returns

	Date	Duration	Persian king	Jewish leader	Scripture	Purpose	Number of returnees
<b>1<sup>st</sup> return</b>	538–515 B.C.	23 years	Cyrus	Zerubbabel	Ezra 1–6; Isaiah 44:28	Rebuilding the temple	50,000
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> return</b>	458–457 B.C.	2 years	Artaxerxes	Ezra	Ezra 7–10	Adorning of the temple and reforming the people	2,000
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> return</b>	444–432 B.C.	8 years	Artaxerxes	Nehemiah	Nehemiah	Rebuilding the wall	

# 19 year scope (444–425 B.C.)

- Artaxerxes' decree (2:1) in 444 B.C.
- Wall built in 52 days (6:15)
- Nehemiah returns to Susa after 12 years (5:14) in the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of Artaxerxes (13:6a) in 432 B.C.
- Seven year gap from 432–425 B.C. (Malachi 430 B.C.)
- Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to impose further reforms “after some time” (13:6b) in 425 B.C.
- Nehemiah's ongoing reforms (Neh 13) in 425 B.C.

# Post exilic scope

- Ezra 1–6: 538 (1:1) to 515 (6:15)
- 58 year gap (515–458); Esther: 483-82 (Esther 1:3) to 474-73 (Esther 3:7)
- Ezra 7–10: 458-57 (7:8) to 457-56
- Thirteen year gap: 457 –444
- Nehemiah 1–12: 444 (2:1) to 432 (5:14; 13:6a)
- Seven year gap: 432–425
- Nehemiah 13-(425–424)

# Post exilic prophets

- Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1; 6:14)
  - Haggai (520 B.C.)-1:1; 2:1, 10, 20)
  - Zechariah (520–518 B.C.)-1:1, 7; 7:1

# Post exilic prophets

- Malachi (430 B.C.)
  - “Governor” (1:8; Neh 5:14; Hag 1:1, 14, 2:2, 21)
  - After 515 B.C. (1:7-10; 3:8)
  - Time needed for temple novelty to wear off
  - Same issues as Nehemiah
  - Nehemiah not governor (1:8; Neh 5:14, 18)
  - Nehemiah’s second governorship reformed the very sins spoken of in Malachi

# Date, Place of Writing, Audience, Occasion

- Date: 424 B.C. shortly after the book's events transpired
- Place of writing = Jerusalem since Nehemiah was Jerusalem's governor
- Audience: third group of post exilic returnees
- Occasion: discouragement, syncreticism

# Purposes

- Encourage the post exilic community by reminding them of God's sovereign activity on their part through the rapid construction of the wall despite much opposition (Neh 1–7)
- Exhort the post exilic community toward covenant loyalty by reminding them of their prior covenant renewal and Nehemiah's reforms (Neh 8–13)

# Message

- God's sovereign work through Persian rulers and Nehemiah and Ezra in preserving the Jewish culture in post exilic times is shown in God's separation of the remnant to Himself both politically (1–7) and spiritually (8–13). The political element was accomplished through the restoration of the dilapidated wall around Jerusalem despite much internal and external opposition (1–7). The spiritual element was accomplished through covenant renewal and ongoing reform (8–13).

# Structure

- Nehemiah 1–7 = Reconstruction of the wall
  - Political > religious
  - Construction > instruction
  - Nehemiah > Ezra
- Nehemiah 8–13 = Restoration of the people
  - Political < religious
  - Construction < instruction
  - Nehemiah = Ezra

# Structure

- Nehemiah 1–7 = Reconstruction of the wall
  - 1–2 = Return under Nehemiah
    - 1 = Nehemiah's concern regarding the wall
    - 2 = Artaxerxes commissions Nehemiah to return
  - 3–6 = Rebuilding of the wall
    - 3 = Rebuilding of the wall
    - 4-6 = Internal and external opposition
  - 7 = Registration of the city's new inhabitants

# Structure

- Nehemiah 8–13 = Restoration of the people
  - 8–10 = People's revival and covenant renewal
  - 11–13 = Further registration of Jerusalem's inhabitants and ongoing reform

# Historical Background

- 586 B.C.—Walls of Jerusalem destroyed
- 446 B.C.—Artaxerxes issues decree ordering the Jews to stop building Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7-23)
- 444 B.C.—Third return (Neh 2:1)
- Entire book of Nehemiah transpires during the reign of Artaxerxes I
- Contemporaries
  - Ezra (8:1-9; 12:36)
  - Malachi

# Distinctives

- Sovereignty of God
- Satanic strategies used to distract Nehemiah from accomplishing His God ordained purpose
- Prayer (9)
- Bibliology (8)
- Last historical book

# Christ in Nehemiah (Luke 24:27, 44)

- No direct messianic prophecies
- Restoration of Israel politically (1–7) and spiritually (8–13) in preparation for the fulfillment of messianic prophecy (Micah 5:2)
- Nehemiah 2 = the starting point (*terminus a quo*) for Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks? (Dan 9:25; Luke 19:42)

# Preservation of Israel

- Religious system (Ezra; Hag; Zech)
- Political system (Neh)
- Race (Esth)
- Orthodox worship (Chr; Mal)

# Decrees of Ezra–Nehemiah

- Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-2)
- Artaxerxes decree to stop building Jerusalem (Ezra 4:7-23)
- Darius' confirmation of Cyrus' decree to rebuild the temple (Ezra 6:1-12)
- Artaxerxes decree to adorn the temple and reform the people (Ezra 7:11-28)
- Artaxerxes' decree to restore the wall of the city (Neh 2:3, 5, 8)

# Nehemiah 1–2

- Nehemiah's concern (1)
  - Report to Nehemiah (1:1-3)
  - Nehemiah's reaction (1:4)
  - Nehemiah's prayer (1:5-11)
- Nehemiah's commission (2)
  - Artaxerxes' decree (2:1-8)
  - Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem (2:9-11)
  - Nehemiah's initial inspection of the dilapidated wall (2:12-16)
  - Nehemiah's initial organization of the rebuilding effort (2:17-20)

# Nehemiah 3–7: construction despite opposition

- Each family builds a section of the wall (Neh 3)
- Two external threats (Neh 4:1-9)
- Three internal threats (Neh 4:10–5:19)
- Three threats aimed directly at Nehemiah (Neh 6:1-14)
- Wall completed in record time despite ongoing subversive efforts (Neh 6:15-19)
- Census (7)

# Nehemiah 8-hearing and response to the covenant

- Reading of the Law (8:1-4)
- Reaction to the Law (8:5-13)
  - Respect (8:5)
  - Worship (8:6)
  - Comprehension (8:7-8)
  - Mourning (8:9)
  - Rejoicing (8:10-12)
  - Obedience (8:13-18)
  - Repentance (9:1-3)

# Nehemiah 9-Levites' prayer

- Levites that prayed (9:5a)
- God's name magnified (9:5b)
- Survey of God's past faithfulness (9:6-31)
  - To Abraham (9:6-8)
  - In the Exodus Event (9:9-11)
  - Physical and spiritual provision to the wilderness wanderers (9:12-21)
  - To the conquest generation (9:22-25)
  - In the face of prolonged rebellion (9:26-31)
- Request for forgiveness (9:32-38)

# Nehemiah 10-covenant renewal

- Signatories (10:1-27)
- Israel's promise to walk in God's Law or suffer a divine curse (10:28-29)
- Specifics (10:30-39)
  - Intermarriage (10:30)
  - Sabbath (10:31)
  - Temple provision (10:32-39)

# Nehemiah 11–12

- Population tithe (11)
- Update on the priestly and Levitical clans (12:1-26)
- Dedication of wall (12:27-47)

# Nehemiah 13-ongoing reform

- Excluding foreigners from the assembly (13:1-3)
- Removing Tobiah from the temple (13:4-9)
- Restoring the Levitical tithes (13:10-14)
- Halting Sabbath breaking (13:15-22)
- Disciplining those who intermarried with pagans (13:23-31)

# Message

- God's sovereign work through Persian rulers and Nehemiah and Ezra in preserving the Jewish culture in post exilic times is shown in God's separation of the remnant to Himself both politically (1–7) and spiritually (8–13). The political element was accomplished through the restoration of the dilapidated wall around Jerusalem despite much internal and external opposition (1–7). The spiritual element was accomplished through covenant renewal and ongoing reform (8–13).

# Purposes

- Encourage the post exilic community by reminding them of God's sovereign activity on their part through the rapid construction of the wall despite much opposition (Neh 1–7)
- Exhort the post exilic community toward covenant loyalty by reminding them of their prior covenant renewal and Nehemiah's reforms (Neh 8–13)