

DOES NEHEMIAH MATTER?

Nehemiah is a good leader and a God-fearer. He's a man that all men and women can learn from. At the same time tough and tender, Nehemiah had God's grandeur firing on the front side of his mind. Theologian J.I. Packer said, *"there is a rough edge to Nehemiah, there is to most leaders."* Nehemiah was bent on God's glory and fame, no matter the personal cost. Whenever we encounter the brokenness and confusion of life we need men and women who can lead in a way that godly wisdom prescribes. In these moments we need a person with deep conviction, humility, and gumption. By God's grace, Nehemiah possessed all three.

And so can we.

What began as a family through Abraham would eventually develop into a kingdom and nation through Jacob (whose name was later changed to Israel). Foolishly, God's royal nation, Israel, chose to repeatedly disobey His commands and thus brought a wave of forewarned destruction upon themselves. It included their capital city, Jerusalem, being ransacked by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. and their people and possessions being carried off as captives in a foreign land.

The Temple and the walls of the city were broken and burned. Jerusalem was defenseless and exposed. Jerusalem means "City of Peace" but the city had none. The tattered remnant of people who remained in Jerusalem were living in *"great trouble and shame"* and surrounded by their enemies.

Centuries before, God said His Messiah would come through a promise made to Abraham, *"In you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed."* This promised Messiah would emerge through the lineage of king David, from the tribe of Judah, in the nation of Israel, but now it seemed there was no nation. The people of Israel were abused and scattered and the nation looked as though it could not survive...

Yet, God always keeps His promises.

Through Nehemiah He would call His people back to the City of Peace, Jerusalem, in the land of Israel...and rebuild it. Because this is the city where His Messiah would one day be known and where He would personally atone — once for all time — for the sins of every man, woman, and child who place their trust in Him. The promised Messiah has come and fulfilled all that was spoken of Him.

He is Jesus of Nazareth. Prince of Peace. Son of Man. Son of God.

In Nehemiah we see the makings of a rebirth. Through this little flock of hassled, tattered, and freshly gathered Israelites in Jerusalem, Jesus' Church would emerge...and no evil gates will stand in opposition to its rush.

NEHEMIAH, THE MAN

Nehemiah was a Hebrew captive of the Persian Empire. He was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes, king of the Persian Empire. Even though a foreigner, Nehemiah occupied a position of trust and potential influence. The cupbearer's job was to taste everything brought forward for the king to drink, determining with his own life if it had been poisoned.

We don't know how Nehemiah became the cupbearer, only that he was cupbearer. Nehemiah kept personal journals and as we read his records we begin to see what Puritan Matthew Henry described as not only the *"work of his hands, but also the workings of his heart."* Though every man has flaws, there are multiple qualities about Nehemiah that stand out as we read of his life and more importantly, the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. This was a monumental endeavor requiring deep reliance on God for wisdom and strength, personal fortitude, complex organizational skill, and earnest passion for God's glory, fame, and good of His people. While the book of Nehemiah is the story of a man accomplishing a great feat, it's even more the story of God bringing forth the redemption of people from all nations, tongues, and tribes.

Several of Nehemiah's qualities worth noting are:

1. **Nehemiah, Man of Prayer.** We have no less than nine of his individual prayers recorded in Nehemiah (see "Nehemiah, Man of Prayer" below.)
2. **Nehemiah, Man of Zeal.** Nehemiah was zealous for the honor and the glory of God. How else can a person stick their neck out so far and so often for something that few can yet see?
3. **Nehemiah, Man of Practical Wisdom.** Nehemiah faced challenges around every corner. Whether designing and overseeing commercial construction projects, securing financing from foreign kings, facing death threats on all sides from foreign enemies, governing a capital city, or shepherding his own people to finish what seemed like an impossible mission, Nehemiah had to employ practical wisdom every single day. Without God's wisdom and "hand upon Him," this was surely an impossible and foolish mission.

DATE

Approximately 445-423 B.C.

The rebuilding of the wall was completed in an astounding fifty-two days. The personal journals of Nehemiah cover approximately 20 years and multiple trips back and forth from Susa to Jerusalem. (Neh. 5:14; 13:6)

OUTLINE

- 1. Nehemiah Returns to Jerusalem to Rebuild Its Walls (1:1-2:20)**
 1. Nehemiah learns of Jerusalem’s dilapidation (1:1-11)Nehemiah gains permission to return and inspects Jerusalem’s walls (2:1-16)
 2. First signs of opposition (2:17-20)
- 2. The Wall Is Built, Despite Difficulties (3:1-7:4)**
 1. The people work systematically on the walls (3:1-32)
 2. Opposition intensifies, but the people continue watchfully (4:1-23)
 3. Nehemiah deals with injustices in the community; Nehemiah’s personal contribution to the project (5:1-19)
 4. A conspiracy against Nehemiah, but the wall is finished (6:1-7:4)
- 3. A Record of Those Who Returned from Exile (7:5-7:3)**
- 4. The Reading of the Law, and Covenant Renewal (8:1-10:39)**
 1. The law is read (8:1-8)
 2. The people are to be joyful (8:9-12)
 3. The people keep the Feast of Booths (8:13-18)
 4. A prayer of confession, penitence, and covenant commitment (9:1-38)
 5. Signatories and specific commitments (10:1-39)
- 5. The Population of Jerusalem and the Villages; Priests and Levites (11:1-12:43)**
 1. Those who lived in Jerusalem and the villages of Judah (11:1-36)
 2. High priests and leading Levites since the time of Zerubbabel (12:1-26)
 3. Dedication of the walls (12:27-43)
- 6. Nehemiah Deals with Problems in the Community (12:44-13:31)**
 1. The administration of offerings for the temple (12:44-47)
 2. Ejection of Tobiah the Ammonite from the temple (13:1-9)
 3. Dealing with neglect of the offerings (13:10-14)
 4. Dealing with Sabbath breaking (13:15-22)
 5. The problem of intermarriage again (13:23-29)
 6. Summary of Nehemiah’s temple reforms (13:30-31)

Outline: Crossway. “ESV® Study Bible.”

LOCATION & BACKGROUND

Nehemiah takes place in the Persian Empire and Jerusalem.

Nehemiah’s memoir begins in the Persian capital of “Susa” which is in the city of Shush, located in modern day Iran. Nehemiah requested that king Artaxerxes allow him to travel to the region “Beyond the River” which referred to Jerusalem, the once great city where God’s Temple — and thus His presence — dwelled with the people. Nehemiah would oversee the rebuilding the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s walls which would create the security necessary for the people to gather and worship God at the Temple once again.

Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls and secured the city just as the curtain closes in the scene of the Old Testament. After Nehemiah and Ezra the Prophets of God will go silent for over 400 years...until the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ.

Ultimately, the way the Father graciously gathered and provided a place of safety for the exiled Jewish people through Nehemiah *foreshadows* how He would gather and rescue His Church through His Son Jesus Christ, providing His chosen people a place of family, belonging, and security in the midst of those who oppose us.

NEHEMIAH, MAN OF PRAYER

Nehemiah sought the help of God often. The following verses record what was happening in Nehemiah’s heart as he sought to follow God’s lead in rebuilding the city of Jerusalem. As you read them, look for themes of God’s sovereignty, repentance (both personal and national), faith in God’s nearness and help, and hope that God’s majesty would be perceived and experienced in all the world.

Nehemiah 1:5-11	Nehemiah 2:4-5, 8	Nehemiah 4:4-9
Nehemiah 5:19	Nehemiah 6:9, 14	Nehemiah 9:6-38 (Prayers of Ezra as recorded by Nehemiah)
Nehemiah 13:14	Nehemiah 13:22	Nehemiah 13:28-31

78 DAYS OF PRAYER (Psalm 71)

SEPTEMBER 11 SUNDAY Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to remind **you** to pray, teach you to pray, and create a lifelong love of prayer within you.

12M Thank the Trinity — Father, Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ — for their plan of salvation for rebels like us.

13T Thank the Lord for His Holiness (Complete Perfection) and ask that you and others recognize it and love it.

14W Thank the Lord for His Justice and ask Him to make you a person who is just and fair.

15T Pray for All of Life Church and for God's will to be done in and through our church family.

16F Thank the Lord for His Strength and the fact that none who oppose Him can win.

17S Thank the Lord for His Compassion on those who are oppressed and abused.

18S Thank the Lord for His Immutable nature (He does not change from bad to good or good to bad. He is Perfect forever).

19M Ask the Lord to help you see the brokenness in you. To give us all eyes, ears, minds, and hearts willing to look, see, and bring the gospel to bear on it .

20T Ask the Lord to remind you that He's faithful, true, and trustworthy.

21W Thank Jesus for fully absorbing all of your shame (as both victim and perpetrator), allowing you to expose it and bring it honestly to Him.

22T Give thanks that God hears our prayers and inclines His ear to hear us.

23F God is our Rock and our Fortress. He cannot be defeated. Therefore we are secure and safe to expose and deal with our heartache and pain.

24S Commit your plans to the Lord in prayer. Large or small. Ask for His blessing and His warning.

25S Pray for your parents and for those who are like parents to you.

26M Pray for you spouse or future spouse.

27T Pray for those in your Missional Community by name and according to need.

28W Praise the Lord for the smallest things you are grateful for.

29T Praise the Lord for the large things He's given you and done in your life.

30F Pray for your enemies, foes, and those you wish to avoid.

OCTOBER 1 SATURDAY Pray for people to come to know Jesus through All of Life Church.

2S Pray for those leading All of Life Church in every known capacity.

3M Ask for a heart and mind of wisdom. That you increase in and grow in it.

4T Pray for the leaders of the City of Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene.

5W Pray that our city and county become more racially diverse *and* unified.

6T Pray that our church helps to bring about racial reconciliation.

7F Ask the Lord to grant you the attitude/reality of repentance (2 Tim. 2:25)

8S Pray we baptize new believers in 2016.

9S Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the Bible.

10M Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the Gospel.

11T Ask the Holy Spirit to help you confess your sin and expose your faults.

12W Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the gospel in new ways/depths.

13T Ask the Holy Spirit to help you listen well to those around you.

14F Ask the Holy Spirit to help you empathize with those you disagree with.

15S Ask the Holy Spirit to help you listen to others and know their stories.

16S Ask the Holy Spirit to help you lead a loved one to Jesus.

17M Ask the Holy Spirit to help you become a disciple-making disciple.

18T Ask Father, Son, and Spirit to make us a disciple-making church.

19W Thank the Lord for His willingness to help us and give us wisdom.

20T Thank the Lord that He cares for those who are hurting and hopeless.

21F Praise God for feeding you and caring for your base needs. Name them.

22S Praise God for those who have been good friends to you.

23S Thank Father, Son, and Spirit that we are a One Year Old Church.

24M Ask Father, Son, and Spirit to make us a faithful, flourishing Ten Year Old Church.

25T Ask Father, Son, and Spirit to make us a faithful, flourishing One Hundred Year Old Church.

26W Praise God for those who have been loyal friends. Ask Him for more.

27T Ask the Lord to make and keep you a loyal friend to others.

28F Ask the Lord to make us a radically generous church.

29S Ask the Lord who He wants you to reach out to and encourage today.

30S Make time to be silent before the Lord and listen to Him today.

31M Pray and thank the Lord only, challenge yourself to make no requests of Him...only praise and gratitude.

NOVEMBER 1 TUESDAY Ask the Lord where and how He wants you to serve His Church.

2W Thank the Lord for protecting your life like He has. Ask Him to continue.

3T Ask the Lord to lead you toward making Himself your only hope.

4F Ask the Lord to give you a mouth and heart that continually praise Him.

5S Ask the Lord to give you a life that supports what your mouth says.

6S Ask Father, Son, Holy Spirit to help you apply the Gospel to your life.

7M Ask Father, Son, and Spirit to remind you of something mighty He's done for you.

8T Ask the Lord to teach you His Word and give you the motives to know it.

9W Examine your heart and ask, "Who is more powerful than you in my life, Lord?" Who holds power over me that is not honoring to You?"

10T Ask the Lord to comfort you and lead you toward repentance.

11F Ask the Lord to comfort you with the salve of the Gospel.

12S Ask the Spirit to make "Jesus" a name that's on our lips often.

13S Thank the Trinity — Father, Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ — for their plan of salvation for rebels like us.

14M Thank the Lord for His Holiness (Complete Perfection) and ask that you and others recognize it and love it.

15T Thank the Lord for His Justice and ask Him to make you a person who is just and fair.

16W Pray for All of Life Church and for God's will to be done in and through our church family.

17T Thank the Lord for His Strength and the fact that none who oppose Him can win.

18F Ask the Lord to continue to soften your mind, heart, and way of life to His influence.

19S Ask the Lord to show you the brokenness both in you and around you.

20S Recognize and thank God for the way He's loved and provided for you.

21M Ask God to help you with discipline: Prayer, Service, Reading the Bible, etc.

22T Thank Father, Son, and Spirit for putting other Christians in your life.

23W Ask the Lord for wisdom and drive to prioritize non-Christians in your life.

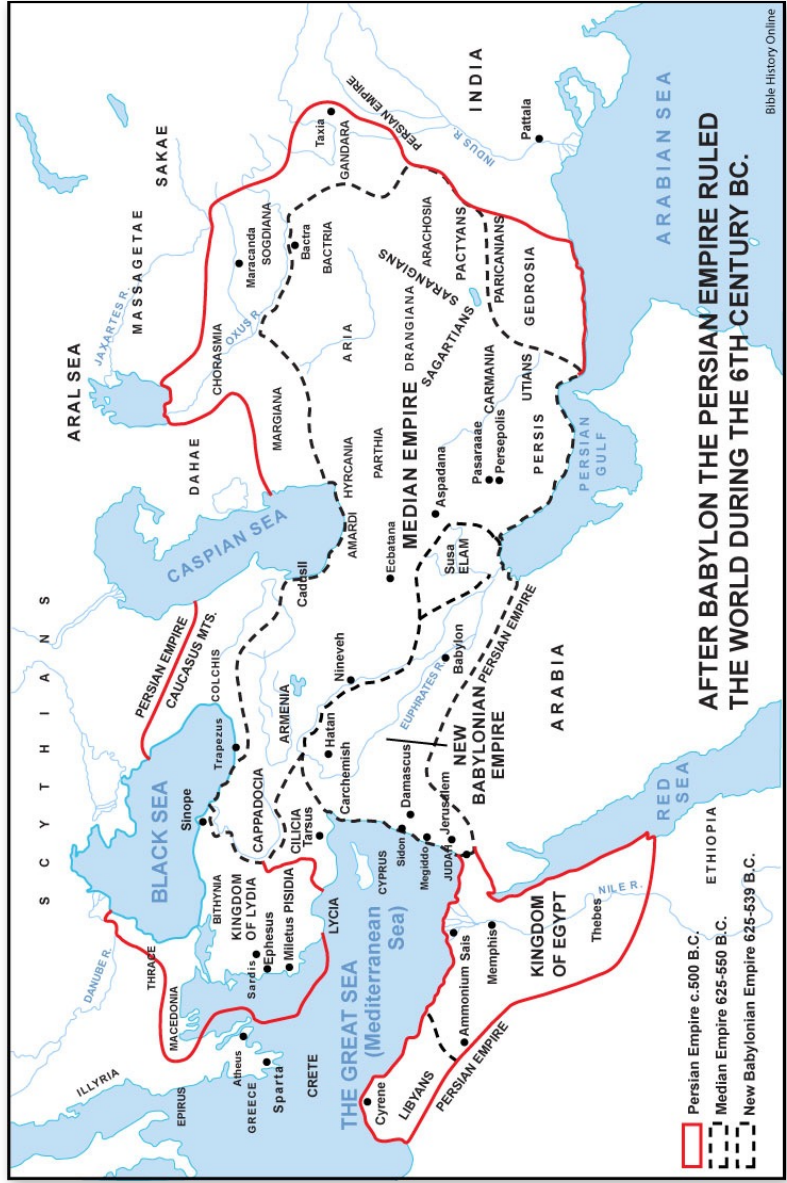
24T Ask the Lord to help you with self-control and wisdom to know where you need it.

25F Thank the Lord for using people like us in His Plan of Redemption.

26S Praise God from whom all blessings flow...

27S Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost...Amen

PERSIAN EMPIRE C. 500 B.C.



NOTES:

Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther

