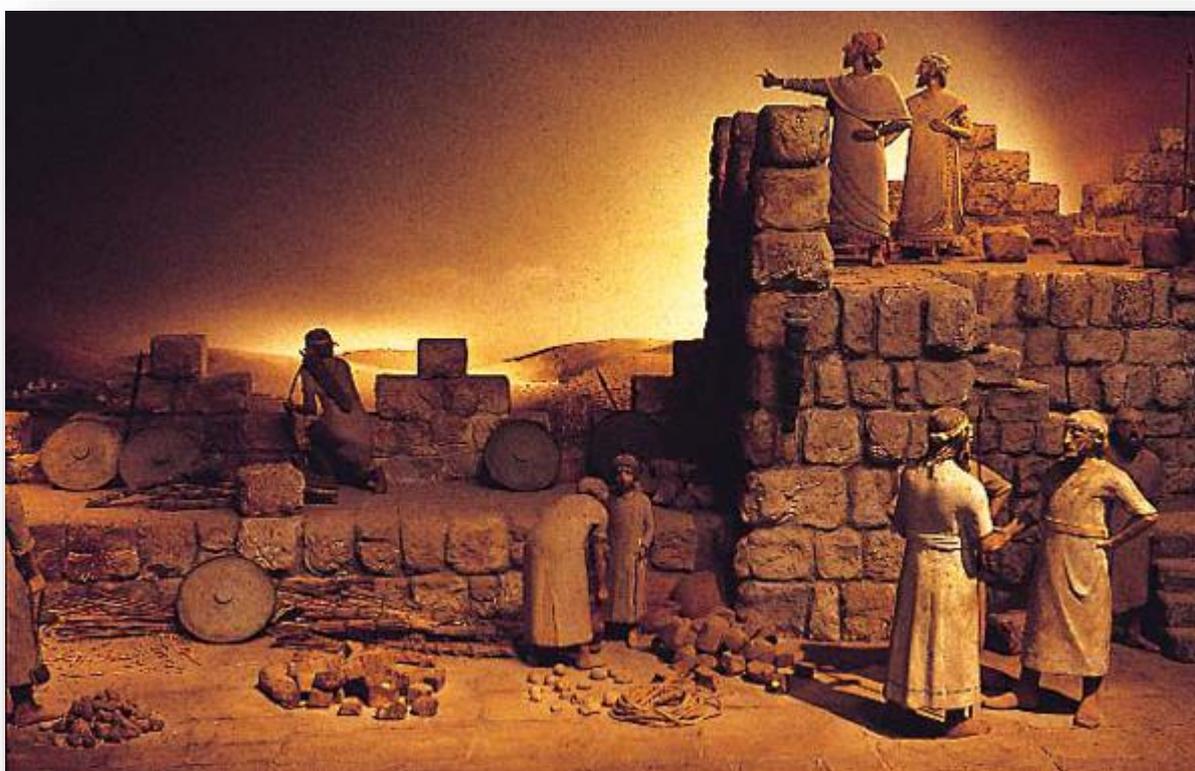


# Book of Nehemiah

## Synopsis



## Introduction

Book No	16
Name	Nehemiah
Written By	Nehemiah
Testament	Old
Category	History
Date Written	Approx. 445 - 432 BC
Place Written	Jerusalem
Audience	To the people of Israel
Purpose	Nehemiah is the last of the Old Testament historical books. It records the history of the third return to Jerusalem after captivity, telling how the walls were rebuilt and the people were renewed in their faith.
History Covered	486 - 432 BC
Chapters	13
Verses	406
Key Verse	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. (6:15, 16)
Key People	❖ Nehemiah ❖ Ezra

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Sanballat</li> <li>❖ Tobiah</li> </ul>
Key Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Susa</li> <li>❖ Jerusalem</li> </ul>

### Purpose of the Book

Nehemiah expresses the practical, everyday side of our faith in God. Ezra had led a spiritual renewal, while Nehemiah was the James of the Old Testament, challenging the people to show their faith by their works.

As the story begins, Nehemiah was talking with fellow Jews who reported that the walls and gates of Jerusalem were in disrepair. This was disturbing news, and rebuilding those walls became Nehemiah's burden. At the appropriate time, Nehemiah asked King Artaxerxes for permission to go to Jerusalem to rebuild its fallen walls. The king approved.

Armed with royal letters, Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem. He organized the people into groups and assigned them to specific sections of the wall (chapter 3). The construction project was not without opposition, however. Sanballat, Tobiah, and others tried to halt the work with insults, ridicule, threats, and sabotage. Some of the workers became fearful; others became weary. In each case, Nehemiah employed a strategy to frustrate the enemies—prayer, encouragement, guard duty, consolidation (chapter 4). But a different problem arose—an internal one.

Rich Jews were profiteering off the plight of their working countrymen. Hearing of their oppression and greed, Nehemiah confronted the extortioners face to face (chapter 5). Then, with the walls almost complete, Sanballat, Tobiah, and company tried one last time to stop Nehemiah. But Nehemiah stood firm, and the wall was finished in just 52 days. What a tremendous monument to God's love and faithfulness. Enemies and friends alike knew that God had helped (chapter 6).

After building the walls, Nehemiah continued to organize the people, taking a registration and appointing gatekeepers, Levites, and other officials (chapter 7). Ezra led the city in worship and Bible instruction (chapters 8–9). This led to a reaffirmation of faith and religious revival as the people promised to serve God faithfully (chapters 10–11).

Nehemiah closes with the listing of the clans and their leaders, the dedication of the

new wall of Jerusalem, and the purging of sin from the land (chapters 12–13). As you read this book, watch Nehemiah in action—and determine to be a person on whom God can depend to act for him in the world.

Nehemiah saw a problem and was distressed. Instead of complaining or wallowing in self-pity and grief, he took action. Nehemiah knew that God wanted him to motivate the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem’s walls, so he left a responsible position in the Persian government to do what God wanted. Nehemiah knew God could use his talents to get the job done. From the moment he arrived in Jerusalem, everyone knew who was in charge. He organized, managed, supervised, encouraged, met opposition, confronted injustice, and kept going until the walls were built. Nehemiah was a man of action.

Nehemiah’s prayer and fasting, qualities of leadership, powerful eloquence, inspirational organizational skills, confidence in God’s purpose, and quick, decisive response to problems qualify him as a great leader and man of God. Most importantly, he shows us a self-sacrificing spirit whose only interest is summed up in his repeated prayer, “Remember me, O my God, for good.”

Four lasting principles stand out in Nehemiah. First, compassion is often the springboard of obedience to God’s will. Second, cooperation with others is required to carry out God’s will. Third, confidence results from fervent prayer and the exposition of the Word of God, which reveals God’s will. Fourth, courage will manifest itself as sanctified tenacity in refusing to compromise on the conviction that one is doing God’s will.

### Overview

- ❖ 16<sup>th</sup> book of the BIBLE, Old Testament and 11<sup>th</sup> of the 12 historical books
- ❖ The historical period covered by the books of Ezra and Nehemiah is about 110 years.
- ❖ Whereas Ezra deals with the religious restoration of Judah, Nehemiah is primarily concerned with Judah’s political and geographical restoration.
- ❖ The first seven chapters deal with the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem.
- ❖ The Book of Nehemiah takes Bible readers to the end of the historical account in the Old Testament, some 400 years before the birth of Christ.
- ❖ Nehemiah is the cupbearer to Artaxerxes, King of Persia.
- ❖ Nehemiah is governor of Jerusalem from for 14 years, from 444 B.C. to 432 B.C.

- ❖ The life of Nehemiah demonstrates:
  - Courage
  - Compassion for the oppressed
  - Integrity
  - Godliness
  - Selflessness
- ❖ As had Moses some 1,000 years earlier, Nehemiah was willing to give up the comforts of a palace in order to help his people.
- ❖ In the Book of Nehemiah, everything in Judea is restored except the king. The next king would be the Messiah.
  - The Temple is rebuilt.
  - Jerusalem is reconstructed.
  - The covenant is renewed.
  - The people are reformed.
  - The Messianic line is intact.
- ❖ The return under Nehemiah takes place 13 years after the return led by Ezra, and some 94 years after the return led by Zerubbabel.
- ❖ Malachi ministers as a contemporary of Nehemiah

### Hebrew Names of GOD used in Nehemiah

- ❖ EL

### Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

While Christ is not directly referred to in Nehemiah, Nehemiah typifies Him by the life he modeled. He was a courageous leader, defying the odds and encouraging the people to do Yahweh's work (2:18), even as Christ defied the people's opposition and encouraged His disciples to endure (John 15:18–27). He was an ardent prayer (2:1–20; 6:9–14), even as Christ was (Luke 6:12). Finally, he was dedicated to God's law (8:9, 10), an important element in Christ's life as well (Matt. 5:17).

### Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

Since creation, the Holy Spirit has been the executive arm of God on Earth. Elihu spoke the truth when he said to Job, "The Spirit of God has made me" (Job 33:4). The pattern

is consistent in that it is the Spirit of God who works to make us all that God desires us to be. Nehemiah 2:18 states, “And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me.” The hand of God, His action on Earth, is the Holy Spirit. Nehemiah, whose name means “Yahweh Comforts,” was clearly an instrument of the Holy Spirit. Under the power of God’s Spirit, he certainly modeled the Holy Spirit’s workings and became one of the early fulfillments of this remarkable prophecy.

## Mega Themes of Nehemiah

### VISION

Although the Jews completed the Temple in 515 B.C., the city walls remained in shambles for the next 70 years. These walls represented power, protection, and beauty to the city of Jerusalem. They were also desperately needed to protect the Temple from attack and to ensure the continuity of worship. God put the desire to rebuild the walls in Nehemiah’s heart, giving him a vision for the work.

Does God have a vision for us? Are there “walls” that need to be built today? God still wants his people to be united and trained to do his work. As we recognize deep needs in our world, God can give us the vision and desire to “build.” With that vision, we can mobilize others to pray and put together a plan of action.

### PRAYER

Both Nehemiah and Ezra responded to problems with prayer. When Nehemiah began his work, he recognized the problem, immediately prayed, and then acted on the problem.

Prayer is still God’s mighty force in solving problems today. Prayer and action go hand in hand. Through prayer, God guides our preparation, teamwork, and diligent efforts to carry out his will.

### LEADERSHIP

Nehemiah demonstrated excellent leadership. He was spiritually ready to heed God’s call. He used careful planning, teamwork, problem solving, and courage to get the work done. Although he had tremendous faith, he never avoided the extra work necessary for good leadership.

Being God’s leader is not just gaining recognition, holding a position, or being the boss. It requires planning, hard work, courage, and perseverance. Positive expectations are never a substitute for doing the difficult work. And in order to lead others, you need to

listen for God's direction in your own life.

### PROBLEMS

After the work began, Nehemiah faced scorn, slander, and threats from enemies, as well as fear, conflict, and discouragement from his own workers. Although these problems were difficult, they did not stop Nehemiah from finishing the work.

When difficulties come, there is a tendency for conflict and discouragement to set in. We must recognize that there are no triumphs without troubles. When problems arise, we must face them squarely and press on to complete God's work.

### REPENTANCE/REVIVAL

Although God had enabled them to build the wall, the work wasn't complete until the people rebuilt their lives spiritually. Ezra instructed the people in God's Word. As they listened, they recognized the sin in their lives, admitted it, and took steps to remove it.

Recognizing and admitting sin are not enough; revival must result in reform, or it is merely the expression of enthusiasm. God does not want halfhearted measures. We must not only remove sin from our lives but also ask God to move into the center of all we do.

## Life Lessons in Nehemiah

<b>Truth</b>	<b>Lesson</b>
<p><b>Growing in Godliness</b></p> <p>Living God's way means making His priorities our priorities, even when they are different from ours. The Bible tells us how to order our lives according to God's will. Understanding and obeying Scripture brings joy to our lives and teaches us to acknowledge God's hand in our success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Identify with God's people through intercession.</li> <li>❖ Understand that you can stand in the gap on behalf of people, confessing sin and praying for mercy and restoration.</li> <li>❖ Give place to the public reading of Scripture.</li> <li>❖ Help those who hear to understand what is being read.</li> <li>❖ Cultivate and promote the joy of the Lord among God's people as a powerful source of spiritual strength.</li> <li>❖ Dedicate your works and accomplishments to the Lord.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Celebrate joyfully all that God has done for you and for His people.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</b></p> <p>We can express devotion to God by generously giving toward the work of the Lord and by making sure that we are caring for His servants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Insure that God’s servants are well cared for.</li> <li>❖ Lift unnecessary burdens from them and enable them to fully give their time and strength to the work the Lord has given them.</li> <li>❖ Tithe regularly so that God’s work may move forward liberally.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pursuing Holiness</b></p> <p>Corporate sin is the occurrence of sin that involves an entire group, church, city, or nation. When this type of sin occurs, deal with it corporately. Whenever possible, gather as many of those involved as will come, confessing sin together and corporately receiving God’s forgiveness and restoration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Allow for the public and corporate confession of sin when necessary and appropriate.</li> <li>❖ Teach and believe that God is gracious and ready to forgive the sins of repentant people.</li> <li>❖ Be diligent to follow God’s ways, and repent for sin each time He convicts you. He will bless you as you do.</li> <li>❖ Be willing to root out worldly ways where they have become established in the life of the church.</li> <li>❖ Reject carnal compromises</li> <li>❖ Refuse evil alliances</li> <li>❖ Do not marry an unbeliever</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Walk of Faith</b></p> <p>Faith takes God at His word and trusts God completely, stepping out and boldly believing the things He has promised.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Pray first, and then speak. This sequence will help you avoid being impulsive and presumptuous.</li> <li>❖ Ask for wisdom so that you will be able to understand the plans and purposes of God.</li> <li>❖ Recount the goodness and favor of God to others.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ It will build their faith and strengthen them in doing His work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Guidelines to Gaining Victory</b></p> <p>We gain spiritual victory by believing that God will fight on our behalf. Knowing this enables ignoring the insults and false accusations of those opposed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Go to the Lord with the reproaches and insults of those who oppose your pursuit of His will.</li> <li>❖ Do not respond in kind, but trust in God's justice and faithfulness. Remember to pray for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:44).</li> <li>❖ Recognize that the enemy tries to attack the work of God by bringing confusion. Pray, and be on guard against it.</li> <li>❖ Realize that all ministry involves spiritual warfare.</li> <li>❖ Be prepared for battle and quick to aid those who are under spiritual attack.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keys to wise living</b></p> <p>Wisdom knows that the LORD is the source of any spiritual advancement. It is also aware that no such progress will go unopposed, but will incur spiritual opposition. Sometimes expressed through human agency. Therefore act with discernment. The wise will discern the true origin of many verbal attacks as an assault motivated by our spiritual adversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ understand that wisdom involves searching out a matter before making any decisions or decrees.</li> <li>❖ Postpone informing others until you have ascertained the mind of the LORD</li> <li>❖ Expect and do not be surprised or dismayed at hostility when you undertake to do the will of GOD</li> <li>❖ Be aware that any favour shown to GOD's people will anger our spiritual adversary.</li> <li>❖ Discern that much human enmity is spiritually motivated</li> <li>❖ Discern and reject negative prophecy from malignant sources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lessons for leaders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Leaders note and reprove those who due to their position or privilege will not serve</li> </ul>

<p>Leaders must insure the welfare of the church. They must lead the way so that everyone carries a fair share of the work and no one puts his own interests above those of others. Leaders are servants providing examples of obedience and diligence to GOD's people. Only those who live this way should be entrusted with leadership responsibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Leaders reprove those who ignore the welfare of others, pursuing instead personal gain</li> <li>❖ Champion the cause of the poor and needy</li> <li>❖ Leaders do not lord it over others rather devout yourself to working diligently</li> <li>❖ Leaders honor men of integrity who fear the LORD. Entrust such with leadership responsibility</li> <li>❖ Leaders understand and teach that righteous living is obedient to the will of GOD as revealed in the scriptures</li> </ul>
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### Praise Points in Nehemiah

- ❖ His help in times of trouble (2:8)
- ❖ Leaders who seek justice for all people (5:9-12)
- ❖ His guidance in making good choices (6:12)
- ❖ His word, which points us to him (8:3)
- ❖ Festivals that recall god's history of kindness to his people (8:16-17)
- ❖ The sabbath, which has been set aside for worship and rest (13:19).

### Worship Insights in Nehemiah

Historic Christian worship usually includes four basic actions: entering into the Lord's presence with praise, listening to God's Word, gathering at the Lord's Table, and going out to serve him in the world. In the ceremony recorded in Nehemiah 8:1-18, Ezra led the assembly of Jewish worshipers in a renewal of their covenant with the Lord. In this ceremony, which extended over several weeks, we discover strong similarities to the traditional pattern of Christian worship.

Ezra began by blessing the Lord and praising his greatness; the people responded by lifting their hands and saying, "Amen!" They worshiped the Lord their King by bowing to the ground (8:6). Ezra and the Levites then read from the Book of the Law and instructed the people. Finally, the leaders sent the people out to celebrate by eating and drinking: "This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the LORD is your strength!" (8:10). After this the people celebrated the Festival

of Shelters for eight days, according to the instructions of the law. The assembly reconvened later in the month.

With a few differences, traditional Christian worship continues these basic actions of praise, instruction, covenant renewal, and service. Although the Judeans could not gather at the Lord's Table as do Jesus' followers, it is easy to see the parallel between the Lord's Supper and the Jews' celebratory meal. As we participate with fellow believers in the fourfold structure of Christian worship, we join Ezra and the Jews of his day in renewing our covenant with God.

- ❖ Fasting and prayer can help us as we prepare for God to work in our life (1:4).
- ❖ Doing God's work will often bring opposition (2:10).
- ❖ God has given each of his people skills and gifts to be used for his glory (3:1-32).
- ❖ Our fear of the Lord will affect our conduct toward other people (5:15).
- ❖ Even in times of prosperity and gladness, the Lord calls us to look out for those who have less (8:10).
- ❖ Public ceremonies can encourage and challenge us to keep our commitment to God (10:30-39).
- ❖ The Lord considers the Sabbath to be very important, and we should also (13:15-22).

## An Outline of Nehemiah

### I. Restoration of the Wall through Nehemiah (Neh. 1:1-7:73)

#### A. Introduction to Nehemiah (Neh\_1:1-11)

1. Dire Report and Deep Response (Neh\_1:1-4)
2. Nehemiah's Prayer (Neh\_1:5-11)

#### B. Nehemiah Prepares to Rebuild (Neh\_2:1-20)

1. Nehemiah Secures the King's Blessing (Neh\_2:1-8)
2. First Encounter with the Regional Leaders (Neh\_2:9-10)
3. Nehemiah's Secret Survey of the Wall (Neh\_2:11-16)
4. Nehemiah Rallies the Troops (Neh\_2:17-18)
5. First Clash with the Opponents (Neh\_2:19-20)

#### C. Teamwork in Rebuilding the Wall: List of Builders and Their

Assignments ([Neh\\_3:1-32](#))**D.** Confronting and Overcoming Opposition ([Neh. 4:1-6:19](#))

- 1.** Nehemiah Confronts Mockery ([Neh\\_4:1-6](#))
- 2.** Nehemiah Confronts the Threat of Attack ([Neh\\_4:7-23](#))
- 3.** Nehemiah Confronts Internal Conflict ([Neh\\_5:1-19](#))
  - a.** The People Complain ([Neh\\_5:1-5](#))
  - b.** Nehemiah's Response ([Neh\\_5:6-13](#))
  - c.** Nehemiah's Sacrifice ([Neh\\_5:14-19](#))
- 4.** Nehemiah Confronts Personal Attacks ([Neh\\_6:1-19](#))
  - a.** Attempt to Distract and Endanger Nehemiah ([Neh\\_6:1-4](#))
  - b.** Attempt to Libel Nehemiah ([Neh\\_6:5-9](#))
  - c.** Attempt to Disgrace Nehemiah ([Neh\\_6:10-14](#))
  - d.** Completion of the Wall ([Neh\\_6:15-16](#))
  - e.** Opposition Continues ([Neh\\_6:17-19](#))

**E.** Jerusalem After the Wall ([Neh\\_7:1-73](#))

- 1.** Guarding Jerusalem ([Neh\\_7:1-3](#))
- 2.** Registration of Residents ([Neh\\_7:4-73](#))

**II.** Restoration of Covenant Life, Phase Two: Ezra and Nehemiah Together ([Neh. 8:1-13:31](#))**A.** Renewal Through Understanding and Celebrating the Law ([Neh\\_8:1-18](#))

- 1.** Reading and Understanding the Law ([Neh\\_8:1-8](#))
- 2.** The People Respond ([Neh\\_8:9-12](#))
- 3.** The Feast of Booths ([Neh\\_8:13-18](#))

**B.** Renewal Through Confession ([Neh\\_9:1-37](#))

- 1.** Description of the Assembly ([Neh\\_9:1-5](#))
- 2.** The Confession ([Neh\\_9:6-37](#))

**C.** Renewal of the Covenant with God ([Neh. 9:38-10:39](#))

1. Sealing the Firm Agreement (Neh. 9:38-10:29)
  2. Specific Tenets of the Firm Agreement (Neh\_10:30-39)
- D.** Ordering a Renewed People (Neh. 11:1-12:26)
1. Settlers in Jerusalem (Neh\_11:1-24)
  2. Villages Where People Settled (Neh\_11:25-36)
  3. Identifying the Priests and Levites (Neh\_12:1-26)
- E.** Dedication of the Wall (Neh\_12:27-43)
1. Preparation for Celebration (Neh\_12:27-30)
  2. Dedication of the Wall (Neh\_12:31-43)
- F.** A Day of Obedience (Neh. 12:44-13:3)
1. Israel Gives the Required Portions (Neh\_12:44-47)
  2. Separation from Foreigners (Neh\_13:1-3)
- G.** Shoring Up Restoration Life: Nehemiah's Second Term (Neh\_13:4-31)
1. Restoring the Holiness of the Temple (Neh\_13:4-14)
  2. Restoring the Holiness of the Sabbath (Neh\_13:15-22)
  3. Restoring the Holiness of the People (Neh\_13:24-31)