

NEHEMIAH

Introduction

Author. Although the author probably drew from the memoirs of Nehemiah, because of the similarities with Ezra, the same person probably authored both books. His exact identity is unknown, although tradition points to Ezra.

Date. This book may be dated after the final return of Nehemiah after 432 B.C.

Occasion. The audience for whom this book was composed found themselves in the disappointing situation of foreign domination. They must have questioned their relationship to the Mosaic covenant and even to God as they continued to labor under Persian rule. The book of Nehemiah demonstrates the hand of God in the rebuilding of the walls so that the people could worship in the temple in safety. Thus the people could be reassured about God's concern for them. At the same time Nehemiah stresses the importance of obedience to the Mosaic covenant even when many of the components of the covenant (political independence, kingship) are not realities. In summary, the book records the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and obedience of the people to the Law of Moses in order to encourage them to worship at the temple in conformity with the Mosaic covenant.

Message Statement. *Worship at the temple in Jerusalem according to the Mosaic covenant is necessary even though certain key aspects of the theocracy are missing.*

Argument

- 1A THE REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM 1:1--7:3
This section continues the theme of the book of Ezra concerning God's providential, as opposed to miraculous, intervention in the affairs of His people to support them in their work. Through prayer and God's support the walls around Jerusalem are completed amidst great opposition, ensuring the ability of the Jews to worship in the temple.
- 1B Nehemiah's Desire 1:1--2:8
This section underscores the fact that Nehemiah's desire to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem is only made possible by God's work in the heart of king Artaxerxes. We also see at the outset

an emphasis on Nehemiah's constant prayer life and thus the importance of prayer in the lives of God's people doing God's work in this time. This section concerning Nehemiah's actions in Susa closes with the notation, "And because the gracious hand of my God was upon me, the king granted my requests" (2:8b).

- 2B Nehemiah's Preparation 2:9-20
Nehemiah prepared to rebuild the walls with wisdom and stealth. He conducts his inspection of the walls, or lack thereof, under cover of darkness. This section closes as well with a statement of confidence of success based upon the supporting hand of God (2:20).
- 3B Nehemiah's Work 3:1-32
This section catalogues the workmen and the repairs which were begun.
- 4B Nehemiah's Opposition 4:1--6:19
The relatively large space given to this discussion stresses its theme: by prayer and God's providential help, the task can be accomplished. In stark contrast to God's modus operandi in the monarchy, God answers prayer here through non-miraculous means. Nehemiah receives pressure both externally and internally. He is first ridiculed to which he responds in prayer (4:1-6). Next a threat of physical harm is given to which the Jews respond with prayer and preparation (4:7-23).
- The next threat to the work comes from within and involves the selfishness of the people. Nehemiah demands that the people live in an unselfish manner not so as to not place burdens upon their fellows. Nehemiah, himself, leads the way with his example of giving up what is due him (5:14-19). Nehemiah once again faces external and internal opposition both of which he overcomes by his resort to prayer and courage.
- 5B Nehemiah's Success 7:1-3
The happy result of Nehemiah's prayer and efforts is the completion of the walls.
- 2A THE REBUILDING OF THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM 7:4--13:31
The section opens by noting the problem that the city of Jerusalem was not sufficiently peopled. Nehemiah then sets about the task of populating the city so that temple worship could be maintained.
- 1B Their Genealogical Purity 7:4-73a
Nehemiah desires to have only those which are true Israelites in order to preserve the nation racially and religiously. Evidently only those who could prove their purity could be considered as inhabitants of Jerusalem. This chapter simply lists the pool of available stock with which the city will eventually be populated.
- 2B Their Moral Purification 7:73b--10:39
More important than their racial purity was the moral purity of the people. The purification of the people begins with a reading of the Law. At the hearing of the Law the people recognize their sin, confess their sin and covenant themselves to obedience. The areas of most flagrant covenant disloyalty which they agree to rectify concern intermarriage, keeping of the sabbath, and service of the temple.
- 3B Their Habitation of Jerusalem 11:1--12:47
With their covenant to obey Moses the people are qualified to inhabit the city and the surrounding villages of Judah. Those who are chosen to live in the city are listed according

to tribe. After the city is properly occupied, the people then dedicate the walls. There purpose of the walls was to protect the inhabitants of the city and the temple. Now with the city peopled, there was reason to celebrate the walls. This celebration concludes with focus upon the reason for the return and rebuilding: worship at the house of God (12:40-47).

- 4B Their Revival 13:1-31
This chapter records the revival that took place upon Nehemiah's second return to the city. He finds that the people have been unfaithful in each area in which they pledged faithfulness (chapters 9-10). Thus revival is needed in the areas of support of the temple and its personnel, sabbath breaking, and mixed marriages. One is thus left with the feeling that in the absence of influential leaders the people soon degenerate into religious mediocrity.

Outline

1A	THE REBUILDING OF THE WALLS OF JERUSALEM	1:1--7:3
1B	<u>Nehemiah's Desire</u>	1:1--2:8
1C	The report from Jerusalem	1:1-3
2C	Nehemiah's requests	1:4--2:8a
1D	From the Lord	1:4-11
2D	From the king	2:1-8a
3C	Nehemiah's answer	2:8b
2B	<u>Nehemiah's Preparation</u>	2:9-20
1C	His journey	2:9-10
2C	His inspection	2:11-16
3C	His encouragement	2:17-18
4C	His determination	2:19-20
3B	<u>Nehemiah's Work</u>	3:1-32
1C	The sheep gate	3:1-2
2C	The fish gate	3:3-5
3C	The old gate	3:6-12
4C	The valley gate	3:13
5C	The dung gate	3:14
6C	The fountain gate	3:15-27
7C	The horse gate	3:28-32
4B	<u>Nehemiah's Opposition</u>	4:1--6:19
1C	External	4:1-23
1D	Verbal: ridicule	4:1-6
1E	the attack	4:1-3
2E	the response	4:4-5
3E	the result	4:6
2D	Physical	4:7-23
1E	the threat	4:7-8
2E	the response	4:9-15
1F	prayer	4:9
2F	delegation	4:10-14
3F	result	4:15

	3E	the resolution	4:16-23
2C	Internal:	selfishness	5:1-19
	1D	Social inequity	5:1-5
	2D	Social reform	5:6-13
	3D	Social example	5:14-19
3C	External		6:1-9
4C	Internal		6:10-19
	1D	From the prophets	6:10-14
	2D	From the nobles	6:15-19
5B	<u>Nehemiah's Success</u>		7:1-3
2A	THE REBUILDING OF THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM		7:4--13:31
1B	<u>Their Genealogical Purity</u>		7:4-73a
1C	The plan		7:4-5
2C	The record		7:6-73a
	1D	Of known descent	7:6-60
		1E the leaders	7:6-7a
		2E the men	7:7b-38
		3E the priests	7:39-42
		4E the Levites	7:43-45
		5E the servants	7:46-60
	2D	Of unknown descent	7:61-65
		1E the men of Israel	7:61-62
		2E the priests	7:63-65
	3D	Their wealth	7:66-69
	4D	Their giving	7:70-72
	5D	Their dwelling	7:73a
2B	<u>Their Moral Purification</u>		7:73b--10:39
1C	The reading of the Law		7:73b--8:18
	1D	Summary	7:73b--8:3
	2D	The reading and interpretation	8:4-8
	3D	The response	8:9-18
		1E repentance	8:9
		2E rejoicing	8:10-12
		3E obedience	8:13-18
2C	The confession of sin		9:1-37
	1D	By the people	9:1-4
	2D	By the leaders	9:5-37
		1E God's grace	9:5-15
		2E Israel's failure	9:16-17a
		3E God's grace	9:17b-25
		4E God's punishment	9:26-30
		5E God's grace	9:31

	6E	Israel's failure	9:32-37
3C		The covenant to obedience	9:38--10:39
	1D	The participants	9:38--10:28
		1E Nehemiah and the priests	9:38--10:8
		2E the Levites	10:9-13
		3E the leaders	10:14-27
		4E the people	10:28
	2D	The oath	10:29-30
		1E concerning intermarriage	10:29-30
		2E concerning the Sabbath	10:31
		3E concerning the temple	10:32-39
		1F gifts of money	10:32-33
		2F gifts of wood	10:34-36
		3F gifts of sacrifices	10:37-39
3B		<u>Their Habitation of Jerusalem</u>	11:1--12:47
	1C	The resettlement	11:1--12:26
		1D Those in the city	11:1-24
		1E the plan	11:1-4
		2E the people	11:5-24
		2D Those outside the city	11:25-36
		3D Those responsible for worship	12:1-26
		1E in the days of Jeshua	12:1-11
		2E in the days of Joiakim	12:12-25
	2C	The dedication of the walls	12:27-47
		1D Ritual purification	12:27-30
		2D Tour of singing	12:31-39
		3D Thanksgiving at the temple	12:40-43
		4D Provisions for the temple	12:44-47
4B		<u>Their Revival</u>	13:1-31
	1C	Concerning foreigners	13:1-9
		1D The general case	13:1-6
		2D The specific case	13:7-9
	2C	Concerning tithes to Levites	13:10-14
	3C	Concerning Sabbath breaking	13:15-22
	4C	Concerning mixed marriages	13:23-31

