



**World Christian Fellowship**

[www.wcflondon.com](http://www.wcflondon.com)  
[wcflondon@gmail.com](mailto:wcflondon@gmail.com)



# NEHEMIAH

## PRAY, PREPARE, PROCEED: A Journey of Faith and Fellowship

Embarking on a journey of spiritual growth and fellowship can be as rewarding as it is transformative. This guide will help you navigate through meaningful experiences that are designed to enhance your connection with both your faith and fellowship. The schedule for Easter camp 2025 is crafted to ensure a balance of worship, learning, and fun. Let's dive into what each day has to offer you.

# Session 1

## Introduction to Nehemiah

### An Overview

The Old Testament contains several different types of books. The books of poetry such as the Psalms and the Song of Solomon.

The books of prophecy such as Jeremiah and Isaiah, but the Old Testament also contains history books, which tell of God's involvement with his people.

The book of Nehemiah is a history book which tells of the efforts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and the way God's people set about revitalizing their faith. Parts of the book of Nehemiah have been written in the first person and therefore read like a diary or a blog.



We hope that looking at how Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem went about rebuilding the walls and rekindling their faith in God will help us do the same in our communities.

*Throughout history, the Lord has used particular men to “stand in the gap”. While we may not be another Apostle Paul, Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, or a Billy Graham, we are called, as men, to follow Christ and to serve as godly-servant leaders.*

The book of Nehemiah provides intentional, practical insight on how to walk with God and allow God to work through us for His glory.

In our study of one of Israel’s greatest leaders, Nehemiah, we will glean much from a man who modelled a life of great character, discipline, determination, zeal, and grace.

In **605, 597** and **586 BC**, the nation of Judah was taken into captivity and the Temple destroyed by the Babylonians. (**2 Chronicles 36:17-20**).

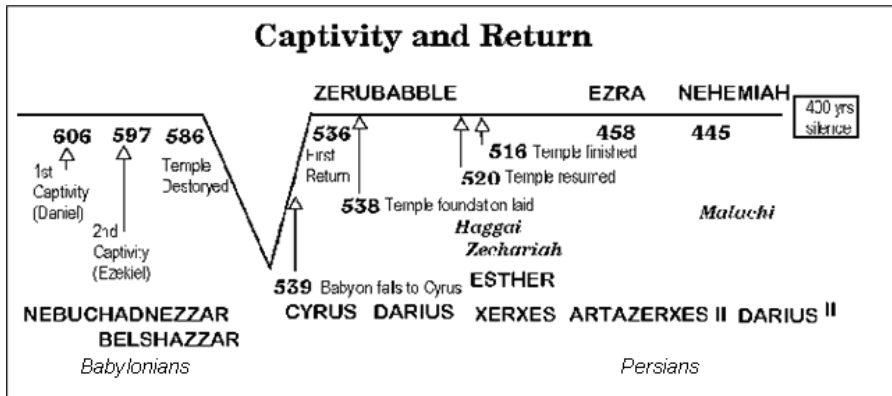
For approximately **70 years**, Israel will remain exiled from their Promised Land.

However, **in 536 BC**, the world power of that time, the Persians, will allow the first group of Jews to return to the land of Israel.

By **516 BC**, the Jewish Temple is rebuilt (**Ezra 7-10**).

Nehemiah’s story occurs approximately 50 years after the rebuilding of the Temple. Under the Persian king, Artaxerxes I, Nehemiah will serve as governor of the Judaeen territory (Yehuda). We are probably 13 years after Ezra left for Jerusalem.

In so doing, he will unite the people, bring reform, and most importantly, rebuild the walls of the Holy City.



Archaeological evidence reveals that the Persian king had constructed numerous fortresses throughout this region during this timeframe due to the threat of Greek and Egyptian invasions. Thus, this trustworthy cupbearer is the perfect candidate to oversee the fortification of Jerusalem.

Little is known about Nehemiah, apart from the fact that he was a Jewish aristocrat in exile who rose to the status of cupbearer to Artaxerxes I in the Persian royal court at Susa.

## NOTES



## **The Composition and Character of the Book**

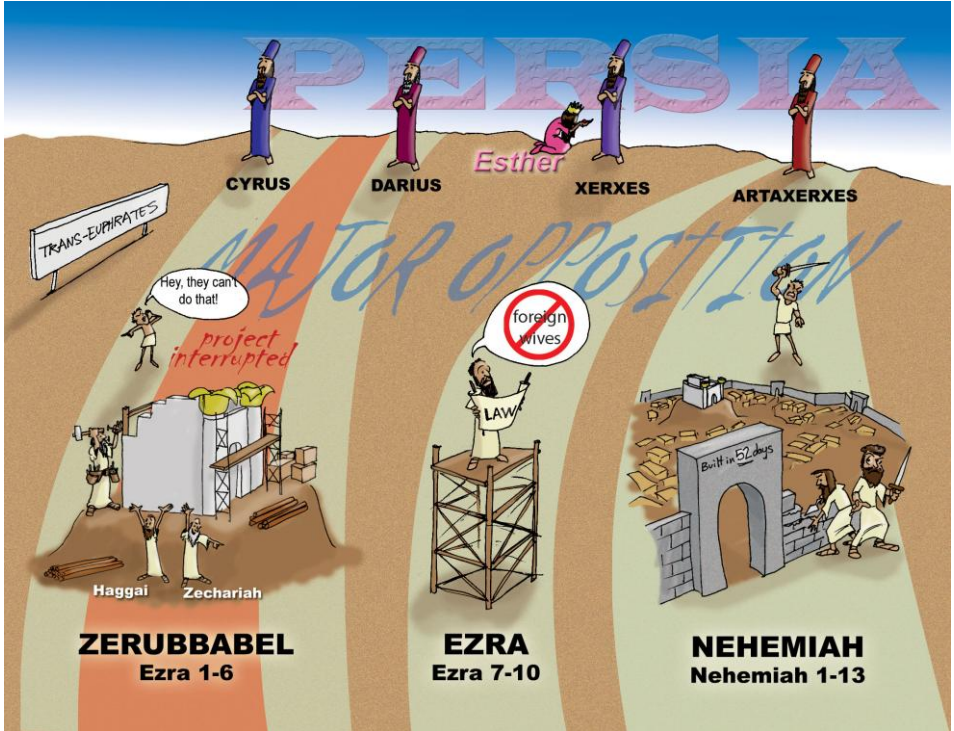
### **1. Relationship to Ezra**

Until the Middle Ages, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah were printed together as one book in the Hebrew bible.

Consequently, together these two books are seen as a literary unit and outlined accordingly.

- I. The Goal Initiated: The Decree to Rebuild the House of God (**Ezra 1:1-4**)
- II. Effort to Accomplish that Goal: The Rebuilding of the House of God (**Ezra 1:5-Nehemiah 7:72**)
- III. The Completion of that Goal: The Celebration of the Rebuilding of the House of God (**Nehemiah 7:73-13:31**)

Important to note is that rather than adhering to a strict chronological sequence, Ezra and Nehemiah arranged events in their narratives for the overall presentation of restoration in the land of Israel.



## 2. Style & Genre of Nehemiah

The following three matters are important to observe when studying the book of Nehemiah:

1. There is an ongoing shift between first- and third-person narration. The first-person speech is personal and subjective

whereas the third-person narration is objective and authoritative.

2. Nehemiah's rhetoric and actions are downplayed by the narrator. The book seeks to downplay individual leaders to elevate the community and display the powerful, gracious hand of God.
3. The genre, or literary type, of this book reflects a memoir. Ancient memoirs recorded events that the narrator personally observed or had performed.

### 3. Theology of the Book of Nehemiah

As we study this book, we need to observe carefully the following overarching theological themes:

The sovereign hand of God in bringing about the restoration of Israel should not be missed. Even secular authorities will act in accordance with God's plan for His people.

The people of God are called to remain faithful and holy irrespective of the political and social climate. **Nehemiah 8-13.**

This deliverance from Babylon, however, demonstrates that the full potential of restoration between God and His people has not yet been realized.

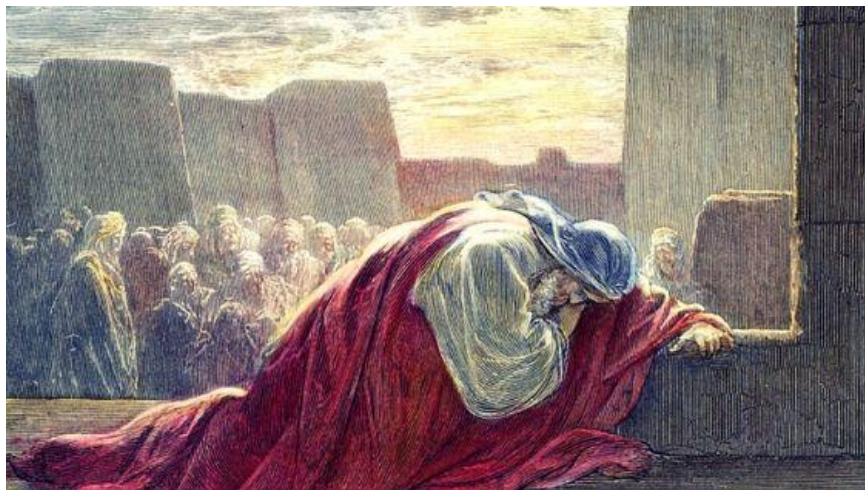
The events that occur under **Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah** are not God's last words but merely a necessary setting of the stage for a far greater act of God in which His search for human obedience within the covenant is finally gratified in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

## **Introduction (1:1-3)**

**Nehemiah 1:1-11**, *The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, <sup>2</sup> that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And they said to me, "The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire." <sup>4</sup> So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.*

*<sup>5</sup> And I said: "I pray, Lord God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, <sup>6</sup> please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. <sup>8</sup> Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; <sup>9</sup> but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' <sup>10</sup> Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. <sup>11</sup> O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be*

*attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.” For I was the king’s cupbearer.*

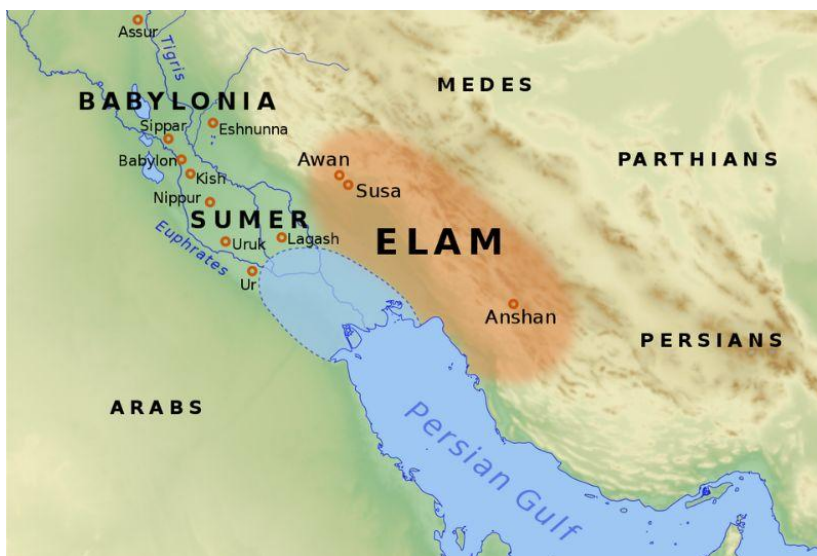


Apart from the mention of his father in verse one and his brother in verse 2, we know little about this man named Nehemiah.

The time frame is December, and the “twentieth year” refers to the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes’ reign (approximately **445 BC**).

## **NOTES**

The location is Susa, the capital of not only Persia, but it is also the capital of the entire ancient world.



**Nehemiah 1:11**, *O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man."*

Nehemiah will inform us that he serves in a very trusted and powerful position within the Persian monarchy.

Because of Nehemiah's position, he has first-hand access to the international news and the opportunity to interact with visiting foreign dignitaries. His political clout allows him to focus his attention on his home capital, Jerusalem.

The news is devastating. The Jewish remnant is being persecuted and harassed by the enemy.

To complicate matters, there is no physical protection for these Jewish settlers. The glorious walls and gates built by Solomon and refortified by Hezekiah lay in ruins.

In these thirteen chapters, we encounter more than a mere Persian cupbearer or Jewish governor. We will examine a man whose life is marked by the following:

Nehemiah is a man who is passionate about glorifying God. His zeal is not fanaticism or pushy egoism, but rather “a humble, reverent, businesslike, single-minded commitment to the hallowing of God’s name and the doing of his will”

Nehemiah is a man who understands that he is dependent upon the Lord.

**Nehemiah 6:15-16**, *So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of Elul, in fifty-two days. <sup>16</sup>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.*

Nehemiah is quick to give praise to the Lord for any accomplishment.

The mighty men of faith, such as **Moses, Daniel, and Nehemiah**, faced great opposition and obstacles.

Yet, they remained faithful and accomplished their God-given tasks because of their view of God, who was greater, more powerful, and consistently faithful than anything this world could offer.

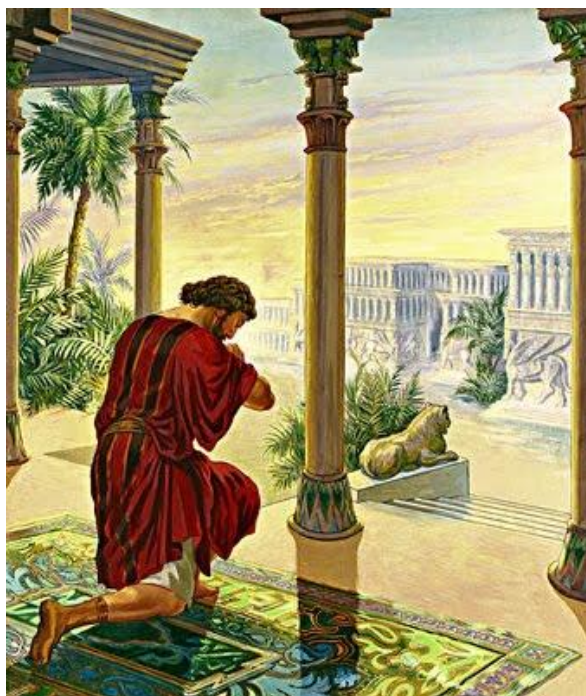
Nehemiah is a man of prayer and godliness.

This book begins with prayer (**1:5-11**) and ends with prayer (**13:14, 22, 29-30**).

Nehemiah clearly models what can occur when a righteous man prays.

**Ephesians 6:18**, *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—*

**1 Thessalonians 5:17**, *pray without ceasing,*



In our hectic schedules and attempts to “get by” or even “make it big,” we can fail to see a world that is hurting, a world that is laying in shambles. The walls are down. And the gates of human souls are razed.

**Are you easily distracted by the next text message or looking for that important email that you fail to listen to those around you?**

**Do you focus your attention on the needs of those around you, or are you too busy and distracted?**

Despite his prestigious political position and his comfortable surroundings, Nehemiah will go and serve God and His people. He valued the Lord and His people over personal gain.



**“A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you and were helped by you will remember you when forget-me-nots have withered. Carve your name on hearts, not on marble.”**  
~ C. H. Spurgeon.

## Identifying the need

Let us begin by going back to the year **445 BC**, about 2,500 years ago.

It was the month of Kislev, probably November or December in our calendar today.

The story begins in the palace of King Artaxerxes in Susa, a city which would be in today's Iran. Nehemiah was far from home. His brother, **Hanani**, and some of his friends from Jerusalem came to Nehemiah in Susa. Naturally, Nehemiah asked: "How is everyone in Jerusalem?"

We would all ask the same question if we hadn't seen our friends and family for some time.

The answer was not good news.

He heard that his family and friends in Jerusalem were "in great trouble" as the walls of Jerusalem had been broken down and the gates of the city burned with fire.



It's hard to imagine how Nehemiah would have felt when he heard the news. But let us try to put ourselves in his position.

Imagine that you are miles away from your home and your church. Let's discuss how far from home you have been.

While you are away, you hear that there has been a fire at your home or your church / chapel and, as a result, your family and friends back home are in "great trouble" as the people of Jerusalem were in the book of Nehemiah.

### **What would be your first reaction?**

Perhaps you would break out in a cold sweat. And then panic.

Many of us would probably start crying. And that was exactly how Nehemiah reacted. He sat down and wept for his people, for his family, for his city and for his nation.

### **What did we learn from the Disciples of Jesus Christ?**

**Matthew 9:35-38**, *Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.<sup>36</sup> But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.<sup>37</sup> Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few.<sup>38</sup> Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest."*



Jesus sees the need.

Jesus identifies the need.

Asking His disciples to pray to God of the harvest.

### **What happens when you pray?**

**Matthew 10:1-4**, *And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. <sup>2</sup> Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Cananite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.*

The same disciples who prayed become the labourers in the kingdom.

### **Prayer leads to Preparation to the task.**

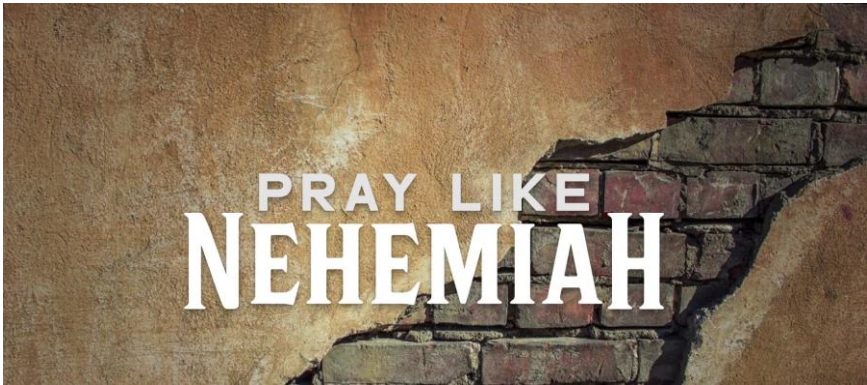
The same disciples who prayed prepared themselves to go out and do the work of the ministry.

Once you are **prepared it should lead you to Proceed** to fulfil the task.

**Luke 10:17-18**, *Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." <sup>18</sup> And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*

### **How many of us have wept over the state of our community spiritual state recently?**

Some Christians weep over often. I sometimes weep over spiritual state and over the side-effects of the spiritual crisis in our communities: drugs, binge drinking, weak-willed politicians, materialism and so on. It is important to notice what Nehemiah did after weeping for his people. He fasted and prayed for days.



**Do you fast or pray for your community or your church sometimes?**

This is our first challenge from the life of Nehemiah.

After identifying the need, he turns to the one who can change the situation – God.

Let's look next at Nehemiah's prayer.

Looking at his prayer, we learn a lot about prayer and what it means to trust God.

Nehemiah praises God for his greatness and his loyalty to his people. This was a bold statement on the part of Nehemiah because this was a period when it seemed to the Jews that God had abandoned them.

**Do we sometimes feel that God has abandoned us?**

Nehemiah confesses his sins and the sins of his fellow Jews before God.

In his prayer, he implies that the Jews have not been faithful in their love for God and have not kept God's commandments. It is important for us to recognize too!

It is important that we are honest with God in prayer.  
We must acknowledge our faults and our sins before God.

If we want a relationship with God, we must begin our journey by acknowledging our sins. In a way, it's like going to the Doctor's.

You must begin by

*acknowledging that there's something the matter – recognising the symptoms and then the Doctor will give the medication.*

By the end of the prayer, Nehemiah thanks God for providing a way of deliverance and begs God to hear his prayer.

He asks God to use him as a servant to assist in the task of restoring Jerusalem and its people.

The two important lessons at the beginning of the book of Nehemiah are

- i) that he identifies the need and
- ii) that he seeks God in prayer as God is the only one who can change the situation.

Discuss what the need is in your community and then seek God in prayer as Nehemiah did.

For the time being, try to avoid discussing possible solutions.  
The purpose of this first session is to identify the need.



**“The most critical need of the church at this moment is men, bold men, free men. The church must seek, in prayer and much humility, the coming again of men made of the stuff of which prophets and martyrs are made.” ~ A. W. Tozer**