

Nehemiah

Authorship: Ezra and Nehemiah were both authored by Ezra, though Nehemiah's name memoirs supplied much of the material for the book bearing his name. Most conservative scholars believe an unknown "chronicler" may have been the final editor of Ezra and Nehemiah as well as 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Date and Location: The events of Ezra – Nehemiah cover 93 years; their compilation was probably completed in about 430 B.C. in Jerusalem.

Recipients: The Jews who returned from Babylon, including not just the two tribes of the south (Judah and Benjamin) but representatives of all 12 tribes.

Overview and Background: (See Ezra) The book of Nehemiah records Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon (445 B.C.), his rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls, his career as a political leader, and his temporary return to Babylon 12 years later (13:6). While Ezra was a priest and Bible teacher who focused his attention on the purification of the people of Jerusalem, Nehemiah was a statesman and builder who focused his attention on their protection.

Purpose (Ezra – Nehemiah): (1) To reassure the returning exiles that God would keep his covenant with them (Neh. 9:32) and that there was therefore "hope for Israel" (10:2); (2) To demonstrate the power of prayer (Ezra 9-10; Neh. 9) and the importance of the Word of God in times of crisis (Nehemiah makes frequent references to reading from the law); (3) To show what can happen when just one person (Ezra and Nehemiah, respectively) takes a stand for the Lord.

Unique Feature:

- Though Esther follows it in the canon, Nehemiah is chronologically the final historical book in the Old Testament.
- Though much of its material was actually compiled by Ezra, Nehemiah is the most autobiographical of the Bible's historical books.
- Nehemiah is one of the best examples in Scripture of a man committed to a vision and to encouraging others to join him in fulfilling that vision.
- Artaxerxes' decree (2:8) marks the official start date of the 70 weeks prophesied in Daniel 9:25-27.

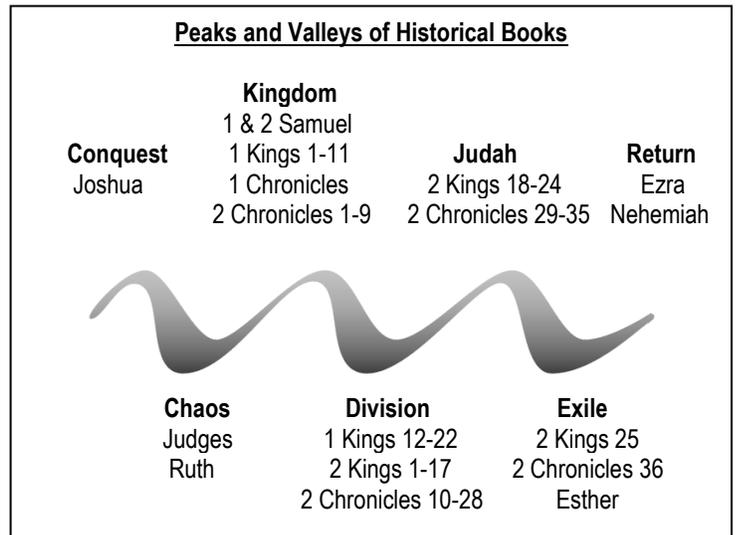
Outline:

I. Nehemiah Rebuilds Jerusalem's Wall (1:1-7:3)

- A. Nehemiah's response to the wall's disrepair (1)
- B. Nehemiah's request to rebuild the wall (2:1-10)
- C. Nehemiah's Reconnaissance of the broken wall (2:11-20)
- D. Nehemiah begins rebuilding the wall (3)
- E. Enemies ridicule, threaten builders (4)
- F. Remedies for problems among the builders (5)
- G. Enemies resume opposition (6:1-14)
- H. Rebuilding completed; security reinforced (6:15-7:3)

II. Ezra and Nehemiah Revive Jerusalem's People (7:4-13:31)

- A. Registering those who returned before Nehemiah (7:4-73)
- B. Ezra reads the law (8)
- C. The reading leads to revival (9-10)
- D. Residents of the land listed (11:1-12:26)
- E. Rebuilt wall dedicated (12:27-47)
- F. Nehemiah's final reforms (13)
 - 1. Exclusion of foreign pagans (13:1-3)
 - 2. Purification of temple rooms (13:4-9)
 - 3. Reinstitution of tithing (13:10-14)
 - 4. Honor of the Sabbath restored (13:15-22)



Key Verse

"But if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there" (Nehemiah 1:9 ESV).

Sources:

Journeying with God: A Survey of the Old Testament, Purposeful Design Publications. Wilmington, Harold L. *Wilmington's Bible Handbook*, Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale, 1997.