

Return Period:
Nehemiah- Rebuilding the Walls *Nehemiah 1:1- 13:31*

Nehemiah, "*The Lord Comforts*," is the last historic book in the Old Testament. When Nehemiah ends, the nation is back in the land, the walls are rebuilt, and 400 years of silence will take place before the coming of Messiah. According to *Unger's Bible Handbook* Nehemiah was included in the Book of Ezra as one book until 1448. Thus it is natural that the ministry years of Nehemiah and Ezra are interwoven. Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem was not until fourteen years after that of Ezra.

The following will be our outline to study the STEP.

I- **The Call and Response of Nehemiah. *Neh 1:1-2:20***

II- **The Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem. *Neh 3:1-7:73***

III- **The Reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra. *Neh 8:1-13:31***

I- The Call and Response of Nehemiah. *Neh 1:1-2:20*

Nothing is known about the childhood, family and early years of Nehemiah. There is speculation that he was probably born in Persia during the captivity. By the time he returns to Jerusalem there had been almost 160 years pass since the captivity, the seventy years before the first return and ninety since the return.

Nehemiah had risen to a high place in the nation of Persia. He was the cupbearer, (personal press secretary and valet) of the King of Persia. One of his duties was to taste the king's wine to make sure it was not poisoned.

In December of 446 B.C. he learned of the sad state of the city of Jerusalem. (*1:2; 7:2*). The report broke

the heart of Nehemiah. (*1:3*) This led Nehemiah to confess and intercede for the people to God. (*1:6-8*)

The King of Persia noticed the sadness of Nehemiah and asked the reason. He told him and requested that he be allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls of the city. (*2:5*)

Soon after returning to Jerusalem, Nehemiah made a midnight ride to survey the walls of the city and sees the great need. (*2:11-15*).

We are introduced to three individuals in ***Neh 2*** that led the opposition to the rebuilding of the walls. Sanballat was the governor of Samaria, Tobiah was an Ammonite official who was in the hire of Persia and Geshem was an Arab and king of Kedar. (*6:6*) These men led an offensive against the wall builders and Nehemiah but did not prevail. Enemies surrounded Nehemiah. The Samaritans were to the north, the Ammorites were to the east and the Arabians were to the south. The sea was on the west.

In *2:20* there is a statement that I think has a great deal of importance today in Jerusalem. Remember Jerusalem is the city of David and Nehemiah tells these Gentiles and Arabs that they had, "***No portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.***" This is no less true today though the city of Jerusalem is a hot issue.

II- The Rebuilding of the Walls of Jerusalem. *3:1-7:73*

The city had a total of ten gates around it. Nehemiah gets the nation of Israel organized to do the work. Each was assigned a particular section of the

wall to rebuild. Notice the names of the gates if you would. These names are an indication of what the gate was used for. The Sheep Gate (**3:1**), Fish Gate (**3:3**), Old Gate (**3:6**), Valley Gate (**3:13**), Dung Gate (**3:14**), Fountain Gate (**3:15**), Water Gate (**3:26**), Horse Gate (**3:28**), East Gate (**3:29**), and Miphkad Gate (**3:31**).

The prophet Daniel had said that the walls would be rebuilt *in "troublous times."* **Daniel 9:25**. As we look at the opposition to the rebuilding of the walls it is evident these were troublous times for Nehemiah and the workers.

Notice a few of the tactics of the opposition. They tried mockery (**2:19; 4:1-3**), and they scoffed at the work (**4:3**). When the walls were going up in spite of this ridicule they resorted to heavy-handed tactics. They planned an armed raid, (**4:7-12**) and tried to draw Nehemiah away from the wall to kill him (**6:1-4**). He also hired a prophet to foretell of his death (**6:10-14**).

Nehemiah though all this kept his focus on the Lord and the work at hand. He fought with prayer (**4:4ff**), and armed the workers with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. During these days neither the guards nor the workers ever removed their clothing.

One of the most miraculous things about the rebuilding of the wall was the time it took to complete it. In only fifty-two days the walls were rebuilt (**6:15**).

He next sets up a watch and order of guards to keep Jerusalem safe. Nehemiah noticed after the walls were built was that the, *"People were few and the houses were not builded."* **Neh 7:4**. He was moved by God to register those who returned over the years and to record the genealogy.

III- The Reforms of Nehemiah and Ezra. **8:1-13:31**

After the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt Ezra and Nehemiah instigated several spiritual reforms. The Water Gate became Ezra's pulpit for the reading of the Word of God. (**8:1-8, 9:3**) The Word of God was also interpreted into the Aramaic language.

The effect of the reading of the Word of God was a revival. The feast of tabernacles was restored. The feast was instituted in **Leviticus 23**. (**23:40-43**) It had not been observed in over 900 years.

Nehemiah records the prayer of Ezra in **9:6-38** in which the entire history of the faithfulness of God toward Israel is recounted. This is one of the longest prayers recorded in the Bible. This prayer led to the making of a new covenant. **10:1-28** records those who signed the covenant.

The obligations of the covenant are found in **10:29-39**. Among them they were to not intermarry with the Gentiles (**10:28-30**), to observe the Sabbath (**10:31**), to support the temple rituals (**10:32-36**), and to pay their tithes (**10:37-39**).

11:1 records how the city of David was repopulated. One in ten would live in the city of Jerusalem and the others would live in the other cities.

The dedication of the walls is recorded in **Neh 12**. (**12:27-43**) The personnel for the temple work was also restored. (**12:44-47**).

The events of **Neh 13** most think occurred after Nehemiah returns from the city of Susa from reporting to the king. (**13:6**) The covenant that the nation made had already been broken.

13:1-2 is a summary of **Deut 23:3-5**. Those who mixed marriage the

Amorites and Moabites, and their descendants, were forbidden by the Law of Moses from even entering the temple. This was due to their treatment of the Jews in the past. (See **Deut 23:4**).

Tobiah the Ammorite had been given a place to live in the temple. **13:7**. Nehemiah threw him and his stuff out of the temple.

13:10-14 shows the people were not paying their tithes and the Levites and priest had to work in the fields. Nehemiah corrected this wrong.

13:15-16 shows they neglected the observation of the Sabbath. He rebukes them (**13:17**) and post guards against this. (**13:19**).

He also confronted those who had inner married with the pagan people. **13:23-24**. He pulled the hair out of those guilty. This might seem extreme but what he wanted to prevent was the judgment of God falling on the nation for this sin. This corruption was even practiced by the priest family. This was especially forbidden because of the corruption of the priestly line. (**Lev 21:6-8, 14-15**). One of the grandsons of the high priest had married Sanballat's daughter.

One thing that characterized Nehemiah and made his great was his attitude. He was a very modest man. Notice the final words of Nehemiah. "... **Remember me, O my God, for good.**"

Application to Life's Steps:

- 1- Ordinary men are called to do extra ordinary task for God.
- 2- The heart of man needs to be touched for the work of God.
- 3- The work of the Lord is never without opposition.

4- The Word of God read and proclaimed is the source of change in man.

5- We must not get side tracked from our purpose when oppositions arise.

6- We must continually be on guard against compromising our integrity and character.

Retracing our Steps:

1- The name Nehemiah means? _____

2- Who was Nehemiah? _____

3- Who were the men who lead the opposition against building the walls?

4- How many days did it take to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem? _____

5- What were some of the oppositions against the rebuilding of the walls?

6- What lead to the revival after the walls were built? _____

7- What were some of the sins they were guilty of that Nehemiah addressed? _____

