

Nehemiah

rebuilding | renewing | restoring
the broken walls of life

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What	A study based on the book of Nehemiah
When	17 October – 21 November
Where	<p>Sunday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 8:00am on-line service is available ▪ 10:00am In-person service <p>Midweek</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-line <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wednesday, 8:00pm ○ Thursday, 7:00pm ▪ In-person <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thursday, 1:30pm (meeting at OCC)
Why	<p>This series from Nehemiah picks up from the return from exile for the Israelites to find Jerusalem and the Temple in disrepair. The walls had fallen down, the Temple was in disrepair, and the homes were in ruins. Everything needed to be rebuilt and restored. Sound familiar?</p> <p>As we return to life after a pandemic, we need to intentionally rebuild our lives, our families, our church, and our world. Let's rebuild and renew!</p>
Format	<p>Teaching on Sunday</p> <p>Discussion, interaction, thinking through next steps in groups, either on-line or in-person</p>

Historical overview

When Babylon's soldiers marched out of Jerusalem in 586 BC, they left a desolate city behind them. Its magnificent temple, built by Solomon 400 years earlier, was reduced to heaps of fallen stone and charred timber. The city's gates, and all its important buildings, were burned. Its strong walls were demolished to ensure the impoverished citizens could not organize another revolt such as the one recently attempted by Zedekiah. Only the poorest of Jerusalem's people were left behind, the rest were led off as captives to distant Babylon.

As the despondent exiles tramped the almost 3000 kilometres of desert highway, their steps were heavy; a burning city was behind them and an unknown future lay ahead. Worst of all was thinking that their present desolation, frequently threatened by the sensitive and courageous Jeremiah, was the chastising hand of God. The punishment inflicted by Nebuchadnezzar was intensified by their guilt and despair. If God was against them, who could be for them?

Yet, all was not lost. The time would come when Isaiah's prophetic word would come gloriously true; their iniquity pardoned, they would emerge from exile as people refined by suffering. Across the centuries, Israel had been led by great people.

- Although costly, Abraham obeyed God and a new race was born, a people destined to make their unique mark on world history.
- Overcoming adversity, Joseph saved not only his own people but other nations as well.
- Moses led the Israelites to freedom.
- Joshua conquered a hostile country.
- Gideon raised an unlikely army.

- David established a city.
- Solomon built a temple.

But to the exiles these echoes of the past were but memories of a remote story. Their blinded king, shackled and humiliated, was alongside them as they trudged the long road to a foreign land. Though they could scarcely have believed it, better days were ahead. God was preparing new leaders for fresh challenges.

In Babylon they were not alone; men and women were being equipped for crucial service.

- Ezekiel's ministry confronted the exiles with higher standards and unfailing resources.
- In a pagan environment, the stories of Daniel and his companions recalled enduring values.

The God who was disciplining them would raise up an unknown Persian prince to be their deliverer. The Israelites would return to their war-torn land and begin again. Challenged by new prophets, God's people would think again about noble things.

- Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi brought persuasive truths to the returned people.
- In God's strength, Zerubbabel organized the rebuilding of a temple.
- Ezra proclaimed the centrality of God's Word,
- and Nehemiah made possible the rebuilding of those broken walls.

In every generation God equips trusted servants for effective leadership¹.

¹ Brown, R. (1998). *The Message of Nehemiah: God's Servant in a Time of Change*. (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.) (pp. 13–14). England: Inter-Varsity Press.

Who Wrote Nehemiah

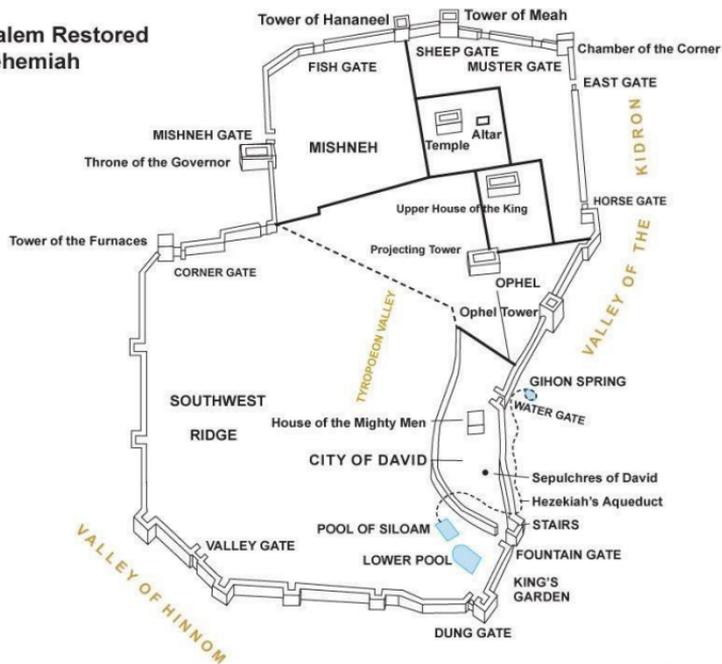
At first glance, the answer to the question seems easy. Nehemiah 1:1 says, “The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah,” so the answer is Nehemiah wrote it. Like many books in the Old Testament, however, this question isn’t as easy as it seems. Here are a few facts to consider as we try to piece together the answer of authorship:

- **Originally 1 Book:** For at least the first thousand years after it was written, Ezra and Nehemiah were considered a single book. One book being divided into two happens frequently in the Old Testament. 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles are all single books that were each divided into two because they wouldn’t fit onto a single scroll.
- **Ezra the Chronicler:** The last verses of 2 Chronicles are the same as the first verses of Ezra. The author of Chronicles is not mentioned in the text. Many scholars believe that Ezra is the unnamed author based on similarities of style between Ezra and Chronicles.
- **Why Divide:** If Ezra wrote the book of Ezra and if Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book, then wouldn’t it be reasonable to believe that Ezra also wrote Nehemiah? If that is that case, what do we make of Nehemiah 1:1? Many people believe that Ezra wrote the book of Nehemiah, but his main source was a memoir written by Nehemiah. The bulk of the book comes from Nehemiah himself. Many of the events recorded are told from the first person perspective. Ezra then compiled the memoir into a coherent narrative and added various lists and genealogies like in Chapter 3 and Chapter 7.

- **So What:** So Nehemiah composed much of the book, but someone else, probably Ezra wrote it down, organized, and edited it. At this point, you may wonder “who cares” or “so what.” The trust is that in this case the issue of authorship, though a little complicated, is not that problematic. The reason it is mentioned here is to remind us of the way authorship works in the Old Testament so that we are able to think clearly and answer fairly when people try to attack the Bible by questioning who wrote it.

Map of Restored Jerusalem

Jerusalem Restored by Nehemiah



Outline of Nehemiah

Our study will not look at everything in the book of Nehemiah, so here is a summary outline of the book.

Chapter	Content
1	Nehemiah receives report (vv1-3) and prays for Jerusalem (vv4-11)
2	Nehemiah appeals to the king (vv1-8), travels to Jerusalem (vv9-11), surveys destruction (vv12-16) and meets the leaders (vv17-20)
3	Listing of builders
4	Sanballat's tirade (vv1-3), Nehemiah's prayer / response (vv4-6), and resisting conspiracy (vv7-23)
5	Problems in governance
6	Sanballat's efforts in distracting Nehemiah (vv1-14) and the completion of the project (vv15-19)
7	Establishing the city (vv1-5) and Zerubbabel's registry (vv6-22)
8	Reading of the Law (vv1-8) and observance of the Feast (vv13-18)
9	Confession, repentance (vv1-3), and review of history (vv4-48)
10	Covenant to obey Law
11	Dwellers in Jerusalem
12	Dwellers in Jerusalem (vv1-26) and dedication of the city wall (vv27-47)
13	Nehemiah returns and reforms

Teaching

#	Date	Text	Theme
1	Oct 17	1:1-11	Broken Walls, Broken Hearts
2	Oct 24		
3	Oct 31		
4	Nov 7		
5	Nov 14		
6	Nov 21		

Week 1 | October 17 | Nehemiah 1

Broken Walls – Broken Hearts

Week 2 | October 24 | Nehemiah

Week 3 | October 31 | Nehemiah

Week 4 | November 7 | Nehemiah

Week 5 | November 14 | Nehemiah

Week 6 | November 21 | Nehemiah

Deconstruction is one of the buzz words in the last number of months.

Reconstruction is not something we talk about.

It's relatively easy to tear apart, to give up beliefs, to doubt.

It's something different to rebuild.

We are coming through many months of covid-19.

And there have been several responses to this season.

- Fear
- Isolation
- Denial
- Anger
- Antagonism

I said to someone a few months ago when Uganda was in the midst of a long lockdown (a lockdown that was more restrictive than anything we have seen in Ontario). They are in a strict lockdown and we complain about wearing a mask.

Here in Canada we are beginning to work through, once again, some of the implications of the residential school system.

We see the systemic injustices and racism.

- Still no clean drinking water in many northern aboriginal communities.
- Canadian government released the Catholic church from financial responsibilities
- Federal and provincial governments in Ontario (both Liberal and Conservative) have repeatedly allowed big business (i.e. mines and lumber) to pollute with no care for the land or the people. For example, in the 1960s and 70s a paper mill near Dryden, Ontario dumped 9-thousand kilograms of mercury into the English-

Wabigoon River. By eating the fish from that river, many people from Grassy Narrows were poisoned with that mercury. But it wasn't until 2017 that Ontario agreed to pay \$85million to clean the mercury from the river. So far nothing has happened.