

# Seven Bible Studies 2017

## History

### November 28: Nehemiah 1-4 (Nick Hermon)

HISTORY: Nehemiah 1-4  
Controversy Over Building A Wall (part 1)

Nehemiah is an Israelite official serving in the Persian government when he hears about the ruined state of Israel's walls. He asks King Artaxerxes for permission to go to Jerusalem to repair them and the king gave him an armed escort.

When he gets there, he starts building the wall but people of Jerusalem show opposition.

Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab laughed and despised Nehemiah saying, "What is this thing that you are doing?"

Chapter 3 lists those who helped him and chapter 4 says that Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem became furious as the wall was being built.

They even conspire to attack to cause confusion.

Nehemiah arms his wall builders with weapons and posts guards to keep watch.

To be continued...

#### Comments:

Butch O'Neal:  
Thank you, Nick! A massive undertaking indeed!

#### Comments:

Ginger Hermon:  
What incredible bravery! Working with 1 hand and weapon in the other from 1st light of dawn till the stars. Earnest efforts - constant preparedness. Never tiring in the work of the Lord. Wonderful examples to us even now. Thanks, Nick. Love this book.

#### Comments:

Charles Fry:  
I am especially amused by the incredulity and ridicule of the opposition:

Nehemiah 4:3  
3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, "What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!"

Somehow, portions of that rubble wall have survived 25 centuries. 😊 A testimony to using what God supplies to build what God wants.

<http://magazine.biola.edu/article/08-spring/nehemiahs-wall-discovered/>  
"Nehemiah's Wall Discovered"

## Comments:

LuAnn Woody:

This book has so many dramatic elements to it- danger, comedy, undertaking an 'impossible' task. I was particularly moved by Nehemiah's prayer. Timeless entreaties.

## December 5: Nehemiah 5-9 (Nick Hermon)

HISTORY: Nehemiah 5-9  
Controversy Over Building A Wall (part 2)

Chp 5 is very Interest-ing. Nehemiah calls out the officials and nobles for charging their own people more than they should. He exclaims, "As far as possible, we have bought back our fellow Jews who were sold to the Gentiles. Now you are selling your own people, only for them to be sold back to us!"

They are speechless and promise to give back to the people.

Later, Nehemiah becomes governor. He writes about how he devoted himself to the work of the wall and doesn't demand food like the governors before him.

Speaking of the wall, chp 6-7 is more controversy over it. Tobiah especially shows opposition and threatens Nehemiah. The wall is completed, Nehemiah put his brother Hannah in command of the citadel, and it lists exiles who return.

TorahFest: The Seven Day Marathon

Chp 8-9 The people come together in the square before the Water Gate as Ezra reads the Book of the Law of Moses from daybreak until noon every day for seven straight days. "From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great" (8:17)

On the 24th day of the month, the Israelites confess their sins, fast, and wear sackcloth. The Levites give intriguing speeches on the major historical points of their people and towards the end of the chapter, makes a binding agreement of the people sealed by the priests.

Will they uphold this covenant?  
Tune in next week!

## Comments:

Butch O'Neal:  
Thanks, Nick!

## December 12: Nehemiah 10-13 (Nick Hermon)

HISTORY: Nehemiah 10-13

Today, we finish the book of Nehemiah. As an overview, chapters 1-7 dealt with the controversy over Nehemiah building a wall, chps 8-12 is on the spiritual renewal of the people and chapter 13 is another anti-climatic-negative finish to the book.

This seems to be a theme throughout Ezra & Nehemiah. Think back to some of the sections within the two books- Zerubbabel refuses help building the temple, Ezra confronts the people in Israel as it rains, and Nehemiah argues over building a wall until it's completed.

Today's reading:

10- lists those who sealed the binding agreement to God. This agreement is basically a promise to follow through with the Laws of Moses

11- lists the leaders of Jerusalem and the tribes they're from

12- lists the priests/Levites and holds a dedication of the Wall of Jerusalem. Can't help but to mention that two choirs sang. One sang at the Sheep Gate and the other sang near the "Dung Gate" (v31)... guess we know which group stinks!



13- is the anticlimactic finish... they do not uphold their promise. The temple is neglected, the Sabbath is dishonored, and goods are traded along the walls he built.

He tries to plead his case to God and basically says, "At Least I Tried."

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Nick's 2cents-

Overall, I am not a huge fan of Nehemiah. It seems like the whole book is him trying to plead his case to God what a good person he is. He goes marching into Jerusalem to rebuild a wall which he was not directly instructed by God to do. In fact, the prophet Zechariah says in chapter 2 that Jerusalem should be a city without walls open for all to worship God but Nehemiah wants Jerusalem to be a closed city of God's people... so there seems to be two conflicting ideologies about what Jerusalem is supposed to look like.

Albeit, Nehemiah's ambition to get things done is admirable. He builds the wall and, for a period of time, gets people focused on what is important... but they don't stick to their agreement. They even start doing sinful things along the very walls Nehemiah built.

Nehemiah is often regarded as an inspirational leader. But in the final chapter, he calls curses down, beats people, and pulls out their hair when they sin (13:25). Does that sound like divine leadership?

Instead of focusing on the hearts of the people, he gets frustrated and quite literally tries to beat the idea of God into them.

The book(s) of Ezra & Nehemiah start with the hope of the temple and the kingdom of God being established but it ends with disappointment. Even though Israel is back in the land, their spiritual state is unchanged. While Ezra and Nehemiah try their best, their political and social reforms don't guide the people to fully follow God. These books end on downers, but they address an important issue... you can lead people in the way they should go, but not all will follow. It is a matter of the heart.

## Comments:

Jack Dyer:

Yes, Nehemiah was human. He made mistakes, but he was a tool used by God in the completion of His plan. In that, he gives us many lessons by which we can glorify God. I guess, that makes me a fan of Nehemiah (as he followed God).

## Comments:

Charles Fry:

I do understand the negative reaction to Nehemiah and his personal record of efforts and longings. In context though, he was trying to save his people and please God, and played a vital role in preserving Israel until the time was right for the Lord to come. I don't live in such a time or circumstance as he did, nor have the same sort of religious and secular authority and responsibility as he carried. (But I sometimes feel similar frustration with foolishness.)

Remember that Moses (Numbers 11:10-15 for example) also had really bad times as leader of Israel, and sometimes called for harsh judgment and strict enforcement of the covenant (Ex 32, Num 25). Likewise with Jeremiah, or Elijah (who called down fire more than once) or David, or any of those great leaders we know much about. Nehemiah's reminiscences are echoed in Psalms of petition and imprecation.

Regarding Jerusalem, I don't think there was a conflict between Zechariah's earlier vision and Nehemiah's labors. Daniel had foretold the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Daniel 9:25) and it seems very likely that prophecy pointed to Nehemiah's work. Zechariah's vision of the greater Jerusalem however comes into being as Paul spelled out in Ephesians 2:14ff when Jesus has taken down the dividing wall of hostility by fulfilling the law and making from all nations, Jew or Gentile, one people built together as one temple in worship of God. The wall of fire Zechariah heard about is seen again in Revelation 20:7-10, a vision of the final conflict when the Lord comes again.

Not so obvious in our English Bibles, but in the oldest existing complete Hebrew Bible (Old Testament, the Leningrad or St Petersburg Codex) the Old Testament ends with Nehemiah. The order is Law, Prophets, Writings (Wrings being Psalms, etc, see Luke 24:45). Thus, the last statement of the Old Testament was "Remember me, O my God, for good." (Nehemiah 13:31). The same word (good) we have in the beginning, at the close of every day of creation in Genesis 1, "God saw that it was good." A desire expressed by Nehemiah to return to the innocence and perfection before sin, before the curse (anticipated in Neh 13:2).

## Comments:

Butch O'Neal:

Thank you, Nick!

## Comments:

Marc Hermon:

I agree with Charles, that Zechariah is referring to the future church.

In the first two chapters of Nehemiah there is a lot of praying on Nehemiah's part. It seems that God answers his prayers and makes the king disposed to send Nehemiah to Jerusalem. It also seems that God chose Nehemiah to be the man for this task.

As far as Nehemiah's discipline goes, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been

trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11). It is a lesson for the church today. We cannot neglect discipline in the church and say we have love. "because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son." (Heb 12:6)

I seem to remember some spankings you received growing up that you didn't like too much either. That was just my way of showing you my love for you! You made me pull my own hair out, though. :)