

STUDY GUIDE AND STUDY QUESTIONS FOR NEHEMIAH

Historical Time and Background for Nehemiah

This historical book of Nehemiah covers the third phase of the *Post-Exilic* period of Israel's history. It is closely linked with Ezra, and is considered the 2nd book of Ezra in the Jewish Scriptures. Those who had been living in Babylon and Persia during the 70 year Captivity that began approximately 605 BC were allowed to return to their homeland. This captivity was a judgement upon Israel's Southern Kingdom (tribes of Judah and Benjamin) for not giving the land its Sabbath rest. See the following Scriptures for some basic insight into the Captivity — Leviticus 25:1-7 / 2 Chronicles 36:20-23 / Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-14; 30:3 / Daniel 9:1-3.

It is written somewhat concurrently with the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah, and focuses on the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem. There are many of the same problems spoken of in Ezra and in Malachi about a hundred years later (see Ezra 9 and 10, and Malachi).

Reading the last chapter of 2 Chronicles, along with Haggai and Zechariah, should help provide a better understanding of the historical context of Ezra and Nehemiah. Familiarity with the Old Covenant Law and history of Israel is also *very* helpful.

The book of Ezra covers the years 537-458 BC and covers the longest time period of three books related to Israel's post-exilic history (overlapping with Esther). The book of Esther covers the years 483-471 BC, and Nehemiah covers the years 444-425 BC (all dates are approximate). These three books are the history that covers the time when Israel was able to return to its homeland after the period of Captivity in Babylon and Persia, paralleling the prophetic ministries of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Important Contemporary People of Ezra / Esther / Nehemiah

The influential leaders of Israel were *Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah*. Zerubbabel was the leader of the first wave of exiles returning from Captivity (about 537 BC). Ezra was a scribe (and teacher) who returned with a second wave of returning exiles in 458 BC). Nehemiah came to Jerusalem as a governor in about 444 BC with another wave of returning exiles.

These three waves of returning exiles roughly correspond this way — the 1st captives were exiled in 605 BC and included the prophet Daniel and his three faithful companions. These were mostly the royal and noble classes. The 1st return of exiles (roughly 70 years later) begins in 537/536 BC. There was a 2nd wave of captives taken in 597 BC. The 3rd wave of captivity took place in 586 BC when both the Temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed. This is recorded by and during the ministry of the prophet Jeremiah. This corresponds to the completion of the temple in 516 BC, which was begun under Zerubbabel's leadership in 520 BC, and corresponds to Haggai's prophecies.

The kings of Persia who ruled over the Jews (in a worldwide empire) would be Cyrus (539-530 BC), Cambyses (530-522 BC), Darius I (522-486 BC), Xerxes I also called Ahasuerus (486-464 BC), Artaxerxes I (465–424 BC), Possibly Xerxes II (424 BC), and Darius II (423-404 BC).

[See the NIV Study Bible time-line chart within the book of Nehemiah and see the following website — <http://www.biblica.com/niv/studybible/nehemiah.php>]

STUDY QUESTIONS FOR THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

Chapter 1

1. Comparing Ezra 7:1-8 with Nehemiah 1:1 — What is the time frame of the book of Nehemiah?
 - a. How much later is this from Ezra's travel to Jerusalem?
 - b. Where is Nehemiah as the book opens?
2. Who arrives to visit Nehemiah, and where had he come from?
 - a. What does Nehemiah ask of him? Who does Nehemiah inquire about?
3. What is this man's response? What does he tell Nehemiah about the people?
 - a. How is the city of Jerusalem described?
4. What is Nehemiah's reaction to what he hears?
 - a. What does he do in response to what he hears?
5. How does Nehemiah address the Lord concerning the situation of the exiles in Jerusalem?
 - a. What are specific things Nehemiah says regarding himself and the people of Israel?
6. What does Nehemiah "remind" the Lord about?
 - a. What promise and hope is Nehemiah referring to ?
7. What are specific requests Nehemiah makes in verse 11?
 - a. Who is Nehemiah referring to? What is Nehemiah's role in regards to this man?
8. What can be learned from this story that can apply to our present time?
 - a. How can this apply to your own role within your home nation?
 - b. How can this apply to the church and its role within the nation?
9. What is (or are) your present role(s) and place of influence in other people's lives?
 - a. How do you see that you could be a greater influence for the Kingdom of God?
 - b. What do you think might need to change or develop in your life for this to happen?

Chapter 2

1. How is Chapter 2:1 directly connected to Nehemiah's prayer in Chapter 1:11?
 - a. When does this take place?
2. What was Nehemiah's condition when he saw the king?
 - a. What is the king's response to Nehemiah and why is this?
3. How does Nehemiah answer the king's concern? What does the king say in response to him?
 - a. What does Nehemiah do before answering the king?
 - b. When or how do you think he could do this while in the king's presence?
4. What is Nehemiah's request of the king, and for what purpose?
 - a. What was the king's response and further request of Nehemiah?

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5. What other requests does Nehemiah make of the king?
 - a. How is this different than when Ezra came before this same king in Ezra 8:22?
6. After Nehemiah arrives in Judah, what does he do?
 - a. Who becomes disturbed about Nehemiah's presence and the letters he brings?
 - b. Why do these people seem upset?
7. What else does Nehemiah do after arriving in Jerusalem?
 - a. When does he do this and who goes with him?
8. What does Nehemiah not tell the people in Jerusalem?
 - a. Why do you think he keeps this to himself?
9. After going through the city of Jerusalem — what does Nehemiah say to the Jewish leaders?
 - a. What does he propose for the leaders to do with him?
10. How does Nehemiah encourage the leaders about this proposition?
 - a. What is Nehemiah's challenge to the leaders and how do they respond to it?
11. What is the reaction towards the Jews by the men spoken of in verse 10?
 - a. What do they seem to accuse Nehemiah and the Jews about what they are planning to do?
 - b. Does this seem justified or true? Why or why not?
12. How does Nehemiah answer these men?
 - a. What does he say to them regarding what the Jews will do and why they will do it?
 - b. What further thing does Nehemiah say to these men?
13. What can be learned from all of this that would be applicable in your life?
 - a. How does Nehemiah demonstrate leadership in this chapter?
 - b. What one thing could you apply in your own life from his example?

Chapter 3

1. Among all the names mentioned in Chapter 3 — Who, if any, stand out to you?
 - a. How many different types of people do you notice are doing the work?
 - b. Whom does it say were not doing this work of rebuilding the wall?
2. What kind of work is being done?
 - a. Are the people doing this work trained or suited for this kind of work?
3. What does all of this speak to you about regarding the people and the type of work done?
 - a. What does this reveal about their situation and the people themselves?
4. How do you see this being applicable in a general sense to the work of ministry?
 - a. How do you see this being applicable in a more specific way to the ministry of a church?

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5. Is there anything God has specifically brought to your attention (heart or mind) in this chapter?
 - a. Is there any specific application for your own life?

Chapter 4

1. How is Chapter 4 directly related to Chapter 3?
 - a. Are these 2 different times, or is this speaking of the same event as in Chapter 3?
2. How do the adversaries of the Jews react to their rebuilding the city wall?
 - a. How are they described and who is spoken of by name?
3. What is Nehemiah's response to what these adversaries say?
 - a. What is the outcome from Nehemiah's response in verse 6?
4. What is the further reaction toward the Jews by these adversaries?
 - a. What is Nehemiah and the Jews' response to all of this in verse 9?
5. What other difficulties are mentioned in verses 10-12?
 - a. How would you characterize these difficulties and their effect on the rebuilding of the wall?
6. How does Nehemiah resolve this situation?
 - a. In what way do you see him providing good leadership?
7. What is the outcome or result of Nehemiah's leadership, as seen in verses 13-14?
 - a. What is the result, both for the Jews and their adversaries?
8. What specific directions does Nehemiah give the leaders and the people?
 - a. How would you describe (IYOW) the picture we're given in verses 16-23?
9. What spiritual and parallel truth can be drawn from all that is seen in Chapter 4?
 - a. What specific exhortations and instruction, from the NT, could be connected to this parallel?
10. What specific applications can be made for your own life, from Chapter 4?
 - a. In what ways can this illustration of spiritual truth be translated into life action?

Chapter 5

1. What seems to be the great problem facing Nehemiah in Chapter 5?
 - a. Who comes to him with this problem?
2. There seem to be 3 concerns voiced by these people, what are they?
 - a. What seems to be the outcome or effect of these 3 issues?
3. What is Nehemiah's initial response to this problem?
 - a. Who does he speak to because of the situation (in verse 7)?

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4. What does Nehemiah say to these other people?
 - a. What specific action does he take to begin dealing with this situation?
5. When does this take place? Is there any indication of time given for this situation?
 - a. If it takes place during the rebuilding of the wall, wouldn't this be a serious disruption of their work?
 - b. If so, why would this be so necessary at the time it takes place?
6. What are the specific things Nehemiah says (what issues does he address) at this meeting?
 - a. How does Nehemiah propose to solve this problem?
7. How do the leaders gathered to this meeting respond to Nehemiah's proposal?
 - a. What else does Nehemiah do to hold these accountable men to their promise?
 - b. How do the people react to Nehemiah's exhortation to these leaders?
8. What value and insight is gained from Nehemiah's journal recorded in verses 14-19?
 - a. How does this provide a frame of reference and give insight to the rest of Chapter 5?
9. What parallel could be drawn from Chapter 5 related to the church and leadership in our present day?
 - a. Could this parallel apply in any other way to our present times?
10. What are some corrective lessons learned from this study that could be applied in your life?
 - a. What are ways you can avoid, or stop, taking advantage of others, or giving into morally or ethically questionable activities?
11. What specific things does Nehemiah do that could have a parallel application for your own life?
 - a. Based on Nehemiah's words and actions in verses 14-18, what possible applications could you make for your own life?
 - b. What are specific ways you can help those who are poor, oppressed or needy?

Chapter 6

1. How does the story of rebuilding the wall continue in Chapter 6?
 - a. What was the status of the rebuilding, as seen in verse 1?
2. Who invites Nehemiah for a meeting, and how does he describe this invitation?
 - a. Why do you think Nehemiah sees it this way? How would he know one way or the other?
3. What is Nehemiah's reply to this invitation?
 - a. What does he give as a reason for this response?
4. What is the continuing response of those who want to meet with Nehemiah?
 - a. What is the message of the 5th letter sent to Nehemiah?
5. What statements are made in this open letter?
 - a. Are these statements true based on what you know from the story in Nehemiah, so far?
6. What is the implied threat and warning in this open letter?
 - a. How does Nehemiah respond to all these accusations in this letter?

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7. How does Nehemiah see their intention with this letter, and its accusations and threats?
 - a. What does Nehemiah do about all this? Who does he speak to about it (see verse 9)?
8. Why do you think Nehemiah did not address each of these accusations and defend himself?
 - a. Do you think Nehemiah should have addressed these things specifically?
 - b. Do you think this would have prevented the further incidents in this chapter? Why or why not?
9. What is Nehemiah's next encounter with opposition and deceit?
 - a. Who does he go to visit and what is Nehemiah told by this man?
10. What is Nehemiah's response to this man?
 - a. What does this reveal about Nehemiah's character as a man and leader of people?
11. What does Nehemiah express that reveals why he responds the way he does?
 - a. How do you think Nehemiah could know this?
12. What is Nehemiah's prayer in verse 14? Why do you think he would pray this way?
 - a. Do you think this is appropriate or right? Why or why not?
13. What great accomplishment is completed, as told in verse 15? How long did this work take?
14. What was the reaction of all those who had opposed Nehemiah and those rebuilding the wall?
 - a. Why does it say these people reacted this way?
15. Did the completion of rebuilding the wall put an end to the opposition by their enemies?
 - a. What is described as taking place after this, and how did it take place? Who was involved?
16. What can this chapter teach you about handling false accusations and threats from others?
 - a. How can this also be applied in regards to spiritual attack and spiritual warfare?
17. What specific things has God shown you, personally, that can be applied in your own life?
 - a. What are specific ways that this will help you deal with people being critical of you?
 - b. How would these things be useful to you in dealing with spiritual attacks from the enemy?
 - c. How would these things be useful to you in dealing with spiritual attacks from the enemy?

Chapter 7

1. What is the situation of the people and the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of Chapter 7?
 - a. Looking back over the first 6 chapters — how is this a fulfillment of Nehemiah's vision in Chap. 2?
2. What is the next thing Nehemiah does because of what has been completed?
 - a. Who is involved and what is the reason given for this in verse 2?
3. What does this reveal about Nehemiah and his leadership?
 - a. How and where do we see something similar to this take place in the early church's history?
4. What instruction is given to those in charge of the city?
 - a. Why do you think this would be important?

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5. What picture do you see from what is described in verses 1-3?
 - a. Is there a spiritual application that can be drawn from this picture?
 - b. If so, what is it and how could it apply to both the church and individual believers?
6. What does God put on Nehemiah's heart to do next?
 - a. What do you think would be the value and purpose of this?
7. Who is excluded from the register recorded in verses 6-64?
 - a. What were they excluded from and why were they excluded?
 - b. When and how could this situation be resolved, if at all?
8. What else is explained about the situation of the people and the city in Chap. 7?
 - a. What did the leaders and people do in verses 70-72 and how does verse 73 complete things?
9. What spiritual parallel can be drawn from the situation of those excluded in verses 61-65?
 - a. How could this be related to the Kingdom of God in general? (see Rev 20:11-15)
10. Is there a personal application you see that could be made from this insight?
 - a. What does it stir in your heart, and what does it motivate or compel you to do?

Chapter 8

For vss 1-12—

1. What takes place during the seventh month following Chapter 7?
 - a. Who is involved and where are they? What description is given about these people?
2. What is Ezra the scribe asked to do? What does he do in response?
 - a. Who is gathered and when does this take place?
 - b. What is significant about this date regarding Jewish custom? How can this be known?
3. What does Ezra begin doing and when does he do this? Where is this taking place?
 - a. Who, specifically, is involved and what does it say their response is to what Ezra is doing?
4. Who else is with Ezra when he begins? Where are all of them located?
 - a. Why do you think these other men are standing up with Ezra?
5. What does Ezra do in sight of all the people gathered?
 - a. What is the people's response when he does this?
 - b. What does this indicate or speak to you about, personally?
6. What does Ezra do next and what are the responses of the people?
 - a. What picture is described here? Why do you think the people respond this way?
7. Who else joins Ezra and for what reason? What does it say they do in verse 8?
 - a. Why do you think this would be necessary?
 - b. In what way is this similar to what often takes place in many churches today?

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8. What do Nehemiah, Ezra and the Levites say to the people being taught?
 - a. Why was this necessary? What were the people doing?
9. What else are the people instructed to do in verse 10?
 - a. What are the people told is an appropriate response?
 - b. Why do you think they're told not to respond in a certain way?
10. What do the Levites instruct the people about further?
11. After hearing these final instructions and exhortations — What do the people do?
 - a. Why does it say they did this? What reason is given for why they responded this way?
12. What specific application(s) can be made from this study of Chapter 8:1-12?
 - a. In what way, in this day and age, can this be useful in daily life for you and others?

For vss 13-18—

13. What takes places on this 2nd day, as noted in verse 13?
 - a. Who is involved and for what purpose does it say they were gathered?
14. What is the picture you see in verse 13?
 - a. In what way could this be similar for Christian believers nowadays?
15. What specific thing from the Law is discovered?
 - a. What is put into action following this discovery?
16. Do you know from what part of the Law they made this discovery?
 - a. If so — where is it in the Bible and what is being described here in verses 14-17?
17. What is unusual or special about this celebration as noted in verse 17?
 - a. What is the result of this celebration that is similar to what is seen in Chapter 8:12?
18. What does it say they continue doing in verse 18?
 - a. What does this speak to you about personally?
 - b. Is there any specific, personal application you can take from these verses in Chapter 8:13-18?
19. In verse 18 there is a reference to the 8th day of celebration — comparing this to what is found in John 7:37 — how might this be seen as a prophetic event?
 - a. What is Jesus' great invitation and promise in John 7:37-39, and what is this directly referring to?
 - b. Have you personally experienced this promise of Jesus?

Chapter 9

1. What are the people of Israel doing at the beginning of Chapter 9?
 - a. How does it describe them and when is this taking place?
2. According to verse 1 and based on Leviticus 23— What event does it seem they are observing?
 - a. What is the intended purpose for this event?

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3. What two things take place in verse 2?
 - a. How does this all happen according to verse 3?
4. What begins to take place in verses 4–5?
 - a. How is this all related to what is said in verse 3?
5. How does this confession of prayer begin in verses 5–6?
 - a. What is being spoken of in verses 7–8?
6. What is most of this prayer of confession describing from verses 9–31?
 - a. What are specific events and accounts spoken of in these verses?
7. How is the nation of Israel spoken of and described?
 - a. How is God spoken of and described in response to what Israel does?
8. How does this prayer end starting at verse 32?
 - a. What do these men say regarding their present situation?
 - b. What commitment is made and how is it made?
9. How has God made Himself known to you during your life and relationship with Him?
 - a. How has this encouraged you and changed your life?
10. What specific lesson have you learned from this chapter?
 - a. In what way can this be applied directly in your life?

Chapter 10

1. How are Chapters 9 and 10 directly connected?
 - a. What verse in Chapter 9 makes this clear?
2. What action do the list of people in verses 1-27 all take?
 - a. Who else is involved in this covenant?
3. What is the primary commitment of this sealed covenant (as seen in verse 29)?
 - a. Is this different than what was expected of the people of Israel by God?
 - b. If so, how and why?
4. What are the more specific commitments listed in verses 30-39?
 - a. How many different things are expressed in these verses?
5. Which ones seem to be related together as one extended commitment?
 - a. What is the final statement in verse 39 that sums up verses 32-39?
6. What specific things did the Lord speak to you about in this chapter?
 - a. Are there any specific lessons you can draw from all of this?
7. What is one specific thing you see that could be applied in your own life?
 - a. How would you see this actually being worked into your life?

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Chapter 11

1. Who are the people who lived within the city of Jerusalem?
 - a. How was it determined who would live within Jerusalem and who would live in other places?
2. Where is this method of choosing between people recommended in the Bible?
 - a. How would or should such decisions be made within the church today?
3. Who was blessed by the people for living in Jerusalem?
 - a. Why do you think this is pointed out in the story?
 - b. Who lived in what places and what did they do or what were there responsibilities?

Chapter 12

1. How does Chapter 12 begin, and how is it directly related or connected with Chapter 11?
 - a. What important things do you see mentioned in the first 26 verses of Chapter 12?
2. What important event begins in verse 27? Why is this so important?
 - a. Who is gathered for this event and what are their responsibilities and activities?
3. How are the leaders situated (set in their places) for this celebration?
 - a. Who is specifically involved and what are their responsibilities and actions?
4. What significant things take place in verse 43?
 - a. How does this contrast with the beginning of Nehemiah and show God's faithfulness?
5. In verses 44–47, what responsibilities are spoken of and who has these responsibilities?
 - a. How could this be related within the church's life and organizational structure today?
6. What stands out to you within Chapters 11 and 12?
 - a. Has God spoken to you in your study of them about anything specific to your life?
 - b. What application can you make from what you learned and how would you begin doing this?

Chapter 13

1. What is understood by the people as they heard the Book of Moses read to them?
 - a. When does this appear to take place? What verses do you base this on?
2. What was the result of hearing and understanding what was read?
 - a. How does this seem to be related to the rest of Chapter 13?
3. What is the first problem Nehemiah tells of, beginning in verse 4?
 - a. Who is involved with this situation and why is it such a problem?
 - b. What is said earlier in the book of Nehemiah that gives insight into this?
4. Where does Nehemiah say that he was at the time this takes place?
 - a. Why do you think he makes a point of saying this and how is related to what follows?

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5. What does Nehemiah discover in verse 7? What are his emotions and actions because of this?
 - a. Does this seem appropriate and right? Why or why not?
6. Who does Nehemiah hold accountable for this problem?
 - a. What seems to be the underlying lesson of verse 11?
7. What is the result of what takes place in verses 8-11?
 - a. What is a simple application that can be taken from all of this?
 - b. How could this be relevant to the church today, or is it all?
8. What does Nehemiah say to the Lord in verse 14? How does it seem expressed?
 - a. Why do you think he does this and do you think it's necessary?
9. What is the second problem Nehemiah speaks of, beginning in verse 15?
 - a. How is this contrary to what was already seen and spoken of in the book of Nehemiah?
10. Who does Nehemiah hold accountable for this second situation?
 - a. How does Nehemiah confront these men? What does he remind them about?
11. How is this directly related to the history of the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther?
 - a. What specific lessons can be learned from this second situation?
 - b. What specific, personal applications could be made in response to this?
12. How does Nehemiah resolve this second major problem?
 - a. What reforms does he establish to correct it? What does Nehemiah command the Levites to do?
 - b. How (if at all) might this command relate to Nehemiah's prayer in verse 22?
13. What is the third problem Nehemiah contends with, beginning at verse 23?
 - a. How is this similar to what Ezra dealt with during his time in Jerusalem?
 - b. How is this directly related to the first 3 verses of Chapter 13, as well as Chapter 10:30?
14. Who appears to be involved with this third situation and who does Nehemiah speak to about it?
 - a. What does Nehemiah say to them specifically?
 - b. Who does he refer to and how is this relevant to their current situation?
15. What other specific situation does Nehemiah deal with and why is this especially grievous?
 - a. What does Nehemiah do in correcting this problem? What are his final words?
16. How is this third problem relevant to believers within the church today?
 - a. How is it both similar and different in its relevance?
17. What applications can you personally make of any or all of these 3 lessons in Chapter 13?
 - a. What are specific things and ways these applications can be made?
18. What one thing stands out to you about the book of Nehemiah?
 - a. What is one truth or lesson you've directly applied from your own study of Nehemiah?