

Questions for further study Jan 24

God's restoration work Getting God's perspective Nehemiah1

Background ...

Ezra & Nehemiah follow on from *Chronicles*, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the people being taken into exile in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (587 BC).

Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther cover the last century of Old Testament Jewish history, roughly 538-433 BC.

The books of *Ezra, Nehemiah & Esther* span the reigns of 5 Persian kings (Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes & Artaxerxes.) Persia was the super power of the day, having overthrown the Babylonian Empire.

Ezra and *Nehemiah* describe the rebuilding of Jewish national life that covered a little over one hundred years.

There are two periods of time that are very important.

➤ 537-517 BC

When King Cyrus came to power he proclaimed that exiled peoples could return to their homelands. An archaeological find – known as the “Cyrus Cylinder” records this proclamation. Jews returned under Zerubbabel the governor and rebuilt the Temple.

God had prophesied Cyrus' role in this 200 years previously ... see Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-4.

➤ 458-433 BC

In 458, Ezra led a second expedition of 1,700 Israelis from Babylon to Jerusalem. It was a journey of 900 miles and took them 4 months.

13 years later, Nehemiah made the journey, having been appointed governor and given authority by the king to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem and restore the city. Malachi was the prophet of the day.

Nehemiah

was the cup bearer to King Artaxerxes – a prestigious and trusted role.

Having heard of the desperate state of Jerusalem, he obtained permission from the king to go to his own country. He left a secure life in the king's court for a life of toil and danger.

He was a courageous leader, a reformer, and a man of prayer.

He also had engineering skills – under his direction it took 52 days to rebuild the walls – much of the time under attack.

Chapter 1.

Describe the situation in Jerusalem that caused Nehemiah so much concern. What actions did he take? What situations cause you to seek God?

- What can we learn from the example of Nehemiah's prayer? What do you discover about his attitude, his knowledge of the Scriptures, his grounds for expecting prayer to be answered? Look up Deuteronomy 7:9-12 that provides some background to this prayer.

- What part has prayer played in the times of vision and calling that you have experienced? Can you think of any times when God has used you as a part of the answer to prayers you have prayed?

- Look up the following verses and see what fasting should be linked with: Joel 2:12,13; Luke 4:1,2; Matt 6:16-18; Acts 13:2,3; Acts 14:23. Why do you think fasting is important?

- What has God taught you in times of waiting?