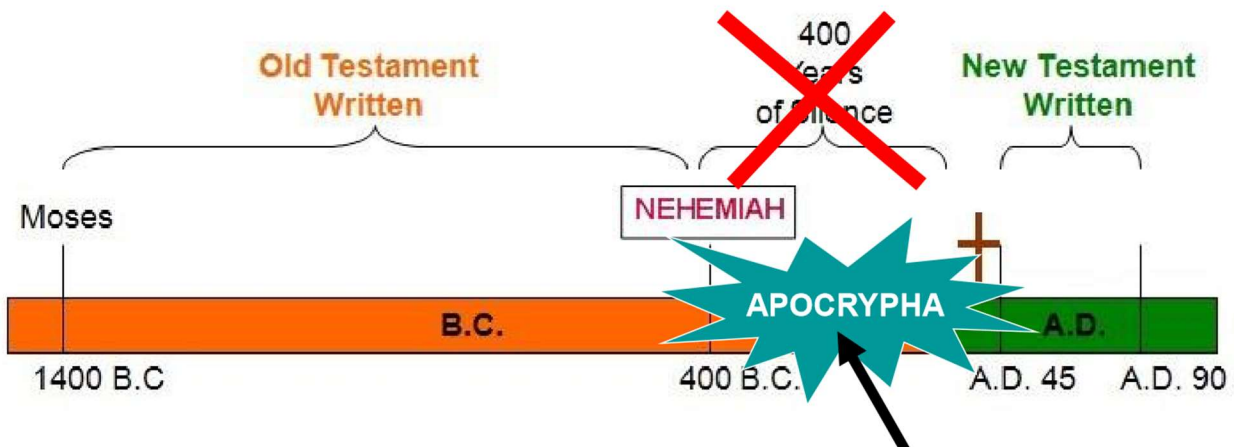


# The Book of Nehemiah

## Introduction

### Historical Setting

When we open this book it's about 446 B.C. or, about 90 years after the Babylonian exiles have been freed by the Persians. So whomever among the Jews that remains in their communities outside of Judah, in other parts of the Persian Empire (which accounts for well over 90% of all living Jews), they do so as a personal choice.



### Nehemiah the Cup Bearer

Nehemiah was not a slave or captive; he chose to live in Shushan, and he chose to serve the Persian king. Being the king's cupbearer was, after all, a highly sought after occupation with lucrative pay, special privileges, and rare fringe benefits.

## NEHEMIAH THE CUPBEARER


- Nehemiah lives in Shushan
- King Artaxerxes Longimanus
- A cupbearer is a high position, trusted
- It's about 446 B.C., about 90 years after the exile ended
- Jews live freely wherever they choose



## **Kingdom Assignments**

One day Nehemiah's brother, Hanani, returns from Jerusalem and brings news that puts Nehemiah into a state of despair. It seems that even almost a century after Zerubbabel led a group of zealous Jews, with Persian King Cyrus's blessing and support, back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and the city, that the city walls and its gates lay in ruin.

### NEHEMIAH RECEIVES BAD NEWS



The illustration shows Nehemiah on the left, wearing a blue and purple robe, looking distressed with his hand to his forehead. Hanani, in a red and green robe, stands before him, holding a staff. Two other men in red and blue robes stand behind Hanani, one holding a staff. They are in an outdoor setting with a stone wall and trees in the background.

- > Hanani comes from Jerusalem with bad news
- > Nehemiah asks for God's help, and then goes to the king
- > Artaxerxes helps Nehemiah go to Judah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem
- > Enemies didn't want the walls reconstructed
- > Poor Jews being taken advantage of
- > Samaritans were the primary threat
- > Nehemiah didn't back down, and the walls were completed

Nehemiah asks God to help him to do something about this, and then as King Artaxerxes notices Nehemiah's sadness he inquires about the trouble and so Nehemiah tells him. The king agrees to allow him to go to Jerusalem to address this matter and to smooth the way even sends letters of Nehemiah's authority as well as royal orders for building material acquisition. This merciful monarch of Persia even provides a troop convoy to assure Nehemiah's comfort and safety on his journey to Judah; Nehemiah, is after all, a valued part of the royal court and is accorded such honors.

## **King Artaxerxes Hidden Agenda**

Now, please understand that King Artaxerxes needs Judah to remain staunchly loyal to him, and this is why he was as anxious as Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of the large fortress city of Jerusalem. So, he did all he could to appease the Jews, to fortify their economy and friendship, give them as much religious autonomy as possible, and even allow them Jewish governors; and he was more than happy to send the super-loyal and trustworthy Nehemiah (his own cupbearer) who he knew so very well to oversee the construction and assure continuing loyalty to the Persian throne.





### Ezra and Nehemiah are contemporaries

A few years earlier Artaxerxes had sent Ezra to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple and re-establish the Levitical Priesthood (mostly funded by the Persian treasury), and so this show of generosity and kindness to the Jews created good relations. So what we tend to see is that while Ezra was mostly concerned with the Temple, the Priesthood and with spiritual matters, and of ridding the Jews of their false doctrines and new Traditions that had come about during their exile, Nehemiah was mostly concerned with practical every day matters that revolved around security, economics, and population increase. It is instructional that we see a Godly priority of urgency established that a few centuries later Yeshua would form into an articulate principle that every follower of His is urged to accept, but I think especially in modern times is to often ignored.



## DIFFERENT MEN DIFFERENT JOBS

- Ezra concerned with the Temple, Priesthood, and spiritual matters
- Nehemiah concerned with practical matters, security, economics, population increase
- Yeshua said: Matt.6:31- 33
- *"...seek first His Kingdom.. Then all these things will be given to you...."*
- First get spiritually ready, then go after the "other things"
- Ezra diplomatic, introspective
- Nehemiah bold mover and shaker

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End of Note s (Content adapted from A Study of Nehemiah by Tom Bradford)