

Book of Nehemiah...The book of Revival and Restoration
we have been studying the character traits of Daniel, so that we too can be courageous in turbulent times. today we start our series on what do we recover in and after the turbulent times... Faith under construction...and often times reconstruction!

1. The beginnings of revival happens when someone is willing to do what they can to bring life back to that which is on its last legs...barely surviving
2. that is what Jesus does...I was almost dead and he brought me back to life... he evives then restores then rebuilds better on this earth... And Resurrection takes it a step farther...when you literally die and lose this body and he resurrects us bodily... in the future we at the restoration of the earth and reuniting of heaven to the earth...
3. but in the mean time we are revived and restored then called to revive and restore other dead and broken...in our generation...
4. But this is not new, just because we now might become aware of the depth of pain and loss and brokenness of people and our land... God has been well aware and working toward these ends for a long time...and that is what we are going to be looking at in the next number of weeks through the life and times of Nehemiah....

Nehemiah ...was a man...who was challenged in his spirit to a crisis that had been going on for over a 150 years...up to his time. And it bothered him deep enough and long enough that he had to and wanted to help turn things around.... but the seeds of the problem were sown generations before.

But in order to understand Nehemiah we need to understand the times and history of the world he lived in...So first a little background...

After the Jews were captured and dispersed by the Babylonians starting in 605 BC and carried the nobility of Judah, including the prophets Daniel and later Ezekiel, off into captivity.

King Nebuchadnezzar **fully conquered** the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. He completely demolished the city of [Jerusalem](#), looted and burned to the ground the original Temple of God, built by [Solomon](#) . and for the next **70 years ruled supreme**, In 536BC this Babylonian empire, came to an end when it fell to the Persians.

Extremely turbulent times for the Israelites...when turbulent times come...the question why always follows...why did this happen...well in this case we have the question answered...

Just prior to the rise of the Babylonian Kingdom in 606 BC... the Prophet Jeremiah received a word from God about what was going to happen and why to the Israelites...

JER 25:1 The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of

Babylon. ² So Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people of Judah and to all those living in Jerusalem: ³ For twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day—the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.

⁴ And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. ⁵ They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁶ Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not arouse my anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you.”

⁷ “But you did not listen to me,” declares the LORD, “and you have aroused my anger with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves.”

⁸ Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, ⁹ I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy^[a] them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. ¹⁰ I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹ This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

¹² “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever.

- **What guilt? God had given them many signs of his power...but nothing changed in their belief system...so they were left in the desolation of their own making.**
- **Why 70 years??** ...it was the last straw the willful disobedience of the Sabbath rest for the land....**allowing the land every seventh year to lay fallow...to rest...**
- **Because the Israelites for 490 years did not give Sabbath rests for the land as God had commanded them through Moses ...he is owed 70 years.. he is serious about his commands and directives!!**

^{2CH 36:20} He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

1. So when King Cyrus conquerors Babylon in 536BC... the seventy years has come to an end...

2. and God moves on the Heart of the King to release the Israelites to go and build their Temple again in Jerusalem.....

3. What caused this...

ISA 44: 24 *“This is what the LORD says— your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, ²⁵ who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, ²⁶ who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers, who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’*

²⁷ *who says to the watery deep, ‘Be dry, and I will dry up your streams,’ ²⁸ who says of **Cyrus**, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’*

ISA 45:1 *“This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: ² I will go before you and will level the mountains^[a]; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. ³ I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. ⁴ For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.*

⁵ *I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, ⁶ so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

So Cyrus reads this and...Cyrus issues a decree in 536BC

EZR 1:1 *In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:*

EZR 1:2 *"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: " `The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Anyone of his people among you--may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.' "*

and 90 years later in 446BC Nehemiah comes on the scene ...and the city, Jerusalem though now inhabited lays in ruins with a temple that is built and being used, but in every way inferior to the Temple King Nebuchanezzar destroyed 150 years earlier..

Enter Nehemiah... **Nehemiah, meaning comforted by Jehovah**, was the son of Hachaliah of Judah. He family was among the Jews of the exile to Babylon and continued to live there.... After the Babylonian empire fell to the Persians, Nehemiah found himself as the royal cup-bearer in the palace of the Persian king Artaxerxes. That trusted and responsible position made possible Nehemiah's role in Bible History - being made the civil governor of Jerusalem, along with Ezra the priest, at the time of the return.

While serving at the palace in Susa, Nehemiah became greatly distressed when he got word that Jerusalem remained in ruins:

NE 1:1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev (November/December) in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

³They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

- Question: Why did the people tolerate living and worshipping in a ruined city for over 90+ years??...Think about it...every Sabbath they would have to step and climb over piles of burnt out building , walls to go wherever they went...how depressing and shameful.
- Somebody had to say..."I think it would be a good idea to clean this up and rebuild the city walls"... probably many did...
Seeing a ruin and doing something about it are two different things...
- **I believe the answer lies in the word found in verse 3...disgrace...**

PR 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

- Webster's dictionary defines disgrace as: the loss of respect, honor, esteem ...
- To live in shame, or embarrassment...they had survived but had no will to rebuild...did not even think they could...best they could do is just get by...

It was embarrassing...but they got used to living that way... the thought of trying to change did not enter their minds as a possibility...

- **Even if they did want to change they were cynical and fatalistic about it.....they talked themselves out of it...it's to hard...it will take to long...cost to much...I am too stressed...I have never done this before...**

- **What is really sad about that mindset...is that they had God on their side...but they probably did not believe it too much....arfter all he allowed them to go through this..**
- **So They would step over the rubble everyday for some and on the Sabbath for all to go and worship God...but yet could not or would not trust him to help them change their circumstances...**
- **Burned doors...even if they built or when they built their enemies demoralized them...or destroyed their work. we live at the mercy of help of others...**
- **They would go into a broken down city to worship God...then leave with no more belief or power or hope to change as when they came in...**
- **What is familiar about that Picture???** How many times have we climbed or crossed over the ruins in our lives to worship God who lives in the temple of our hearts...
- Our past, Our character defects, our circumstances which cause shame in us or embarrass us, our choices and history in our relationships haunt us, failures and disillusionments...the storms and turbulent times...all take their toll sap our strength and will to try again... to rebuild...
- we begin to make due and we get used to stepping over the rubble, trying to go around just getting stuck by obstacles..or just ignoring or down playing the many opportunities to progress...saying it is just the way I am... and just the way it is..I cannot change...

What are we to do? What Nehemiah did ...

⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

5. **he was a busy man..but he stopped...sat down and wept...he acknowledged the hurt and pain and circumstances ...of himself , his people and his land...he grieved the reality...he mourned... *He as was burdened...a burden is a deep concern, a deep caring, to be troubled in your soul... a burden is when you feel the heart of God about a situation..you cant help it and you cant get rid of the burden...***
6. **it drives you to take it to God...who gave it to you...**
1. **So he took it to God....and fasted and prayed...fasting along with intense prayer usually only happens when we are heavily burdened...weighed down...**
7. ***He as* was burdened...a burden is a deep concern, a deep caring, to be troubled in your soul...you feel the heart of God about a situation**
Prayer puts us in touch with the causes of the problem...the roots...

^{Neh 1:5} Then I said: "LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins

we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

⁸"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

¹⁰"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

- **He is deeply burdened for his people and his country...and prays, according to scripture he prayed praying went on for four months...**
 - Realizing it was their sin...that caused them to be taken captive...forced into slavery...
 - And takes responsibility for himself...not everyone else, they have their own responsibility, but acknowledges he is part of the problem...
 - But God's mercy exhibited before is available now...but more...he can restore and rebuild...and will bring them back not only home...but better... for he is a restoring God..

2. Notice **He did not criticize... he prayeritized...** here is the principle: If you don't care enough to participate much, you ought not care enough to criticize it much.

- If one is not willing to participate one has no right to critique...
- Now a burden is not a critique...unless the criticism breaks your heart, driving you to prayer opening your heart to respond...if that is not happening than quit criticizing...
- **the problem with Prayer is it almost always opens the door to action...**

¹¹Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.

3. **And your initial place of action ...is right where you are currently...**

- **Nehemiah has a political appointment as cupbearer...and confidant or the king:**
Extrabiblical references that mention the office of cupbearer in the Persian court have revealed that this was a position second only in authority to the king. Nehemiah was keeper of the king's signet ring, but he also tasted the king's food to make sure no one had poisoned it
- Nehemiah as a royal cupbearer would probably have had the following traits: **1.** He would have been well trained in court etiquette (cf. Dan. 1:4-5). **2.** He was probably a handsome individual (cf. Dan. 1:4, 13, 15). **3.** He would be a man of great influence as one with the closest access to the king, and one who could well determine who could see the king. **4.** Above all, Nehemiah had to be an individual who enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king."¹³

- **All action must be guided by God's timing...his grace and resources**

- Not only did he pray he planned...
 - Prayer will lead to opportunity ...Life is not a spectator sport...
 - but burden, prayer and opportunity mean nothing if you are not committed!
- the question is ...are you committed to restore and rebuild, *Whether it is building your life...or God's Kingdom....*

end

- He has a political appointment as cupbearer...and confidant or the king ...interestingly he recalls to himself that the King is just a man like him...his personal shame has been lifted...not in awe of others anymore...
- the cupbearer...
- Would taste all beverages before the King did...a way to protect the King...no wonder he prayed for the King's long life...
- All action must be guided by God's timing...his grace and resources
- Not only did he pray he planned...
- Prayer will lead to opportunity Strategy only good if we are committed. Commitment requires our participation...Life is not a spectator sport...

2.

3. Don't criticize...prayeritize

- This burden must be put to prayer...
- the burden draws us to pray...intimacy with God
- Prayer brings Action...spiritual, personal, material, relationa
- Action means Involvement
- Involvement means Change
- Change causes Improvement and Growth

If one is not willing to participate one has no right to critique...

Now a burden is not a critique...unless the criticism breaks your heart , driving you to prayer opening your heart to respond....if that is not happening than quit criticizing...

If you don't care enough to participate much, you ought not care enough to criticize it much.

- He is deeply burdened for his people and his country...and prays...
- We are not told how long he was burdened ...but according to scripture he prayed
- Realizing it was their sin...that caused them to be taken captive...forced into slavery...
- But God's mercy will bring them back...for he is a restoring God

Nehemiah has a political appointment as cupbearer...and confidant of the king: Extrabiblical references that mention the office of cupbearer in the Persian court have revealed that this was a position second only in authority to the king. Nehemiah was keeper of the king's signet ring, but he also tasted the king's food to make sure no one had poisoned it

Nehemiah as a royal cupbearer would probably have had the following traits: **1.** He would have been well trained in court etiquette (cf. Dan. 1:4-5). **2.** He was probably a handsome individual (cf. Dan. 1:4, 13, 15). **3.** He would be a man of great influence as one with the closest access to the king, and one who could well determine who could see the king. **4.** Above all, Nehemiah had to be an individual who enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king."¹³

-
- Would taste all beverages before the King did...a way to protect the King...no wonder he prayed for the King's long life...
- We are not told how long he was burdened ...but according to scripture he prayed for four months...Nisan is in March/April
- All action must be guided by God's timing...his grace and resources
- Not only did he pray he planned...
- Prayer will lead to strategy.....
- Strategy only good if we are committed. Commitment requires our participation...Life is not a spectator sport...

Are you committed to participate??

Whether it is building your life...or God's Kingdom....

- **allowed to go and build the temple in Jerusalem...completed in 516BC...**

@@@@@

the people had been set free...and allowed to go home, and build their temple...had been

Nothing you have become aware of today in our world had a start before...but God is in charge of it all!! and has something for us to do in our generation to help him revive and restore...starting with ourselves...

@@@START HERE@@@@@

Theme: There is a saying: if you have a burden you are included in the solution....

- A burden is a deep concern, a deep caring, to be troubled in your soul...you feel the heart of God about a situation
- A burden is not a critique...unless the criticism breaks your heart, driving you to prayer and opening your heart to respond....if that is not happening than quit criticizing.
- If you don't care enough to participate much, you ought not care enough to criticize it much....one of the ways God gets His people to help carry out his desires is to place a burden in their hearts...a burden that they just cannot get away from, even when they try...
- In fact this is how you can recognize a burden ...you move toward the situation...where as someone with merely a concern really hopes somebody does something about this situation as they move on in their daily life.

Why did God allow this captivity to take place? 490 years no Sabbath rests for the land...he is owed 70 years.. he is serious about his commands and directives!!

^{2CH 36:20} He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

To understand we must go back in time...to the Year 606 BC...Israel had fallen into a state of apostasy...they had prospered and walked away from God...and God had sent prophets to call them back...the last straw was the willful disobedience of the Sabbath rest for the land....**Every seventh year let the land lay fallow...to rest...**

Prophecy given to Jeremiah 606BC.... 19 years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587BC...First year of King Nebuchadnezzar...

JER 25:1 The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ² So Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people of Judah and to all those living in Jerusalem: ³ For twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day—the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.

⁴ And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. ⁵ They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁶ Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not arouse my anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you.”

⁷ “But you did not listen to me,” declares the LORD, “and you have aroused my anger with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves.”

⁸ Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, ⁹ I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy^[a] them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. ¹⁰ I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹ This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

¹² “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians,^[b] for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever.

Why did God allow this captivity to take place? 490 years no Sabbath rests for the land...he is owed 70 years.. he is serious about his commands and directives!!

^{2CH 36:20} He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

- **Finally released by King Cyrus 536BC...allowed to go and build the temple in Jerusalem...completed in 516BC...**

EZR 1:1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

EZR 1:2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: " `The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. ³ Anyone of his people among you--may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴ And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.' "

Why would this King do this...to let conquered people who literally had their homeland destroyed go home to rebuild? Of all of the human empires that affected the people of Israel, the Persians did something rather unique - they permitted the return of the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, by God's command (see above verses), 70 years after their exile by the Babylonians under [King Nebuchadnezzar](#).

Why did God allow this captivity to take place? 490 years no Sabbath rests for the land...he is owed 70 years.. he is serious about his commands and directives!!

[2CH 36:20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.](#)

To understand we must go back in time...to the Year 606 BC...Israel had fallen into a state of apostasy...they had prospered and walked away from God...and God had sent prophets to call them back...the last straw was the willful disobedience of the Sabbath rest for the land....**Every seventh year let the land lay fallow...to rest...**

Prophecy given to Jeremiah 606BC.... 19 years before the destruction of Jerusalem in 587BC...First year of King Nebuchadnezzar...

JER 25:1 The word came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. ² So Jeremiah the prophet said to all the people of Judah and to all those living in Jerusalem: ³ For twenty-three years—from the thirteenth year of Josiah son of Amon king of Judah until this very day—the word of the LORD has come to me and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened.

⁴ And though the LORD has sent all his servants the prophets to you again and again, you have not listened or paid any attention. ⁵ They said, “Turn now, each of you, from your evil ways and your evil practices, and you can stay in the land the LORD gave to you and your ancestors for ever and ever. ⁶ Do not follow other gods to serve and worship them; do not arouse my anger with what your hands have made. Then I will not harm you.”

⁷ “But you did not listen to me,” declares the LORD, “and you have aroused my anger with what your hands have made, and you have brought harm to yourselves.”

⁸ Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: “Because you have not listened to my words, ⁹ I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” declares the LORD, “and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy^[a] them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. ¹⁰ I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. ¹¹ This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

¹² “But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians,^[b] for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever.

Why did God allow this captivity to take place? 490 years no Sabbath rests for the land...he is owed 70 years.. he is serious about his commands and directives!!

^{2CH 36:20} He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

- **Finally released by King Cyrus 536BC...allowed to go and build the temple in Jerusalem...completed in 516BC...**
- Of all of the human empires that affected the people of Israel, the Persians did something rather unique - they permitted the return of the people of the southern kingdom of Judah, by God's command (see above verses), 70 years after their exile by the Babylonians under [King Nebuchadnezzar](#).
- Cyrus delivers them for he reads the letter of Isaiah written about 712BC... 150+ years previously where God mentions Cyrus by name..
- Isaiah lived during the late eighth and early seventh centuries BCE, which was a difficult period in the history of Jerusalem.

The history of the first return of exiles, in the first year of [Cyrus the Great \(536 BCE\)](#), till the completion and dedication of the new [temple](#), in the sixth year of [Darius Hystapes \(515 BCE\)](#), ch. 1-6. 21 years

The history of the second return under [Ezra](#), in the seventh year of [Artaxerxes Longimanus](#), and of the events that took place at [Jerusalem](#) after Ezra's arrival there (7-10).

2CH 36:15 The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. ¹⁷ He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and spared neither young man nor young woman, old man or aged. God handed all of them over to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁸ He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. ¹⁹ They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

Why did God allow this captivity to take place? 490 years no Sabbath rests for the land...he is owed 70 years.. he is serious about his commands and directives!!

2CH 36:20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. ²¹ The land enjoyed its Sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.

2CH 36:22 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

2CH 36:23 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

" `The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up.' "

Cyrus delivers them for he reads the letter of Isaiah written about 712BC... 150+ years previously where God mentions Cyrus by name..

Isaiah lived during the late eighth and early seventh centuries BCE, which was a difficult period in the history of Jerusalem. He was part of the upper class but urged care of the downtrodden. At the end, he was loyal to King Hezekiah, but disagreed with the King's attempts to forge alliances with Egypt and Babylon in response to the Assyrian threat.

Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of four kings -- Uzziah (Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. According to tradition, he was martyred during the reign of Manasseh, who came to the throne in 687 BCE. That he is described as having ready access to the kings would suggest an aristocratic origin.

The 66 chapters of Isaiah consist primarily of prophecies of the judgments awaiting nations that are persecuting [Judah](#). These nations include [Babylon](#), [Assyria](#), [Philistia](#), [Moab](#), [Syria](#), [Israel](#) (the northern kingdom), [Ethiopia](#), [Egypt](#), [Arabia](#), and [Phoenicia](#). The prophecies concerning them can be summarized as saying that [God](#) is the God of the whole earth, and that nations which think of themselves as secure in their own power might well be conquered by other nations, at God's command.



The Book of Isaiah

The judgments, however, are not only against those who persecute Isaiah's country, Judah. Chapters 1-5 and 28-29 prophesy judgment against Judah itself. Judah thinks itself safe because of its covenant relationship with God. However, God tells Judah (through Isaiah) that the covenant cannot protect them when they have broken it by idolatry, the worship of other gods, and by acts of injustice and cruelty, which oppose God's law.

*ISA 44:24 "This is what the LORD says--
your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb:*

*I am the LORD,
who has made all things,
who alone stretched out the heavens,
who spread out the earth by myself,*

*ISA 44:25 who foils the signs of false prophets
and makes fools of diviners,
who overthrows the learning of the wise
and turns it into nonsense,*

*ISA 44:26 who carries out the words of his servants
and fulfills the predictions of his messengers,
who says of Jerusalem, 'It shall be inhabited,'
of the towns of Judah, 'They shall be built,'
and of their ruins, 'I will restore them,'*

*ISA 44:27 who says to the watery deep, 'Be dry,
and I will dry up your streams,'*

ISA 44:28 *who says of [Cyrus](#), 'He is my shepherd
and will accomplish all that I please;
he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt,"
and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid." '*

ISA 45:1 *"This is what the LORD says to his anointed,
[to Cyrus](#), whose right hand I take hold of
to subdue nations before him
and to strip kings of their armor,
to open doors before him
so that gates will not be shut:*

ISA 45:2 *I will go before you
and will level the mountains;
I will break down gates of bronze
and cut through bars of iron.*

ISA 45:3 *I will give you the treasures of darkness,
riches stored in secret places,
so that you may know that I am the LORD,
the God of Israel, who summons you by name.*

ISA 45:4 *For the sake of Jacob my servant,
of Israel my chosen,
I summon you by name
and bestow on you a title of honor,
though you do not acknowledge me.*

ISA 45:5 *I am the LORD, and there is no other;
apart from me there is no God.
I will strengthen you,
though you have not acknowledged me,*

ISA 45:6 *so that from the rising of the sun
to the place of its setting
men may know there is none besides me.
I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

- From 536BC to December 446BC the city lay in ruins... 90 years +

The News Arrives December 446BC

Nehemiah, meaning comforted by Jehovah, was the son of Hachaliah of Judah. He was among the Jews of the exile to Babylon. After the Babylonian empire (see [Ancient Empires - Babylon](#)) fell to the Persians (see [Ancient Empires - Persia](#)), Nehemiah found himself as the royal cup-bearer in the palace of the Persian king Artaxerxes. That trusted and responsible position made possible Nehemiah's role in [Bible History](#) - being made the civil governor of [Jerusalem](#), along with Ezra the priest, at the time of the return.

While serving at the palace in Susa, Nehemiah became greatly distressed when he got word that Jerusalem remained in ruins:

NE 1:1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hachaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ² Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

*NE 1:3 They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and **disgrace**. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."*

NE 1:4 When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.

Question: Why did the people tolerate living and worshipping in a ruined city for over 90+ years??

Think about it...every Sabbath they would have to step and climb over piles of burnt out building , walls to go wherever they went...how depressing and shameful.

Somebody had to say..."I think it would be a good idea to clean this up and rebuild the city walls" ... probably many did...

Seeing a ruin and doing something about it are two different things...

I believe the answer lies in the word found in verse 3...**disgrace**...

PR 25:28 Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control.

- [Webster's dictionary defines disgrace as: the loss of respect, honor, esteem ...](#)
- [To live in shame, or embarrassment](#)

It was embarrassing...but they got used to living that way... the thought of trying to change did not enter their minds as a possibility...

- Even if they did want to change...they talked themselves out of it...it's too hard...it will take too long...cost too much...I am too stressed...I have never done this before...
- What is really sad about that mindset...is that they had God on their side...
- They would step over the rubble everyday for some and on the Sabbath for all to go and worship God...but yet could or would not trust him to help them change their circumstances...
- Burned doors...even if they built or when they built their enemies demoralized them...or destroyed their work.
- They would go into a broken down city to worship God...then leave with no more power to change as when they came in...
- What is familiar about that Picture...

How many times have we climbed or crossed over the ruins in our lives to worship God who lives in the temple of our hearts...

1CO 6: 19 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

- Our character defects, our circumstances which embarrass us, our relationships, which we so earnestly desire to change at one time...
- Sometimes... become over time ...things we just try to step over, go around or ignore ...saying it is just the way I am... I cannot change...

What are we to do?

Don't criticize...prayeritize

- This burden must be put to prayer...
 - the burden draws us to pray...intimacy with God
 - Prayer brings Action...spiritual, personal, material, relational
 - Action means Involvement
 - Involvement means Change
 - Change causes Improvement and Growth

If one is not willing to participate one has no right to critique...

Now a burden is not a critique...unless the criticism breaks your heart, driving you to prayer opening your heart to respond....if that is not happening than quit criticizing...

If you don't care enough to participate much, you ought not care enough to criticize it much.

Prayer puts us in touch with the causes of the problem...the roots...

NE 1:5 Then I said:

"O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands, ⁶ let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's house, have committed against you. ⁷ We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

NE 1:8 "Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹ but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

NE 1:10 "They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

I was cupbearer to the king.

- He is deeply burdened for his country...and prays...
- We are not told how long he was burdened ...but according to scripture he prayed
- Realizing it was their sin...that caused them to be taken captive...forced into slavery...
- But God's mercy will bring them back...for he is a restoring God
- He has a political appointment as cupbearer...and confidant or the king
- Would taste all beverages before the King did...a way to protect the King...no wonder he prayed for the King's long life...
- We are not told how long he was burdened ...but according to scripture he prayed for four months...Nisan is in March/April
- All action must be guided by God's timing...his grace and resources
- Not only did he pray he planned...
- Prayer will lead to strategy.....

- Strategy only good if we are committed. Commitment requires our participation...Life is not a spectator sport...

Are you committed to participate??

Whether it is building your life...or God's Kingdom....

The following are three separate starting points in the captivities of Judah.

The 1st captivity of Judah started around [605 - 604 BC](#), in the aftermath of the [Battle of Carchemish](#) Nebuchadnezzar takes a party of Jews captive, signalling the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem. This is the captivity mentioned in Daniel 1:1 when Daniel and his companions were taken captive.

The 2nd captivity of Judah started in [597 BC](#), Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem, but leaves it standing, taking only certain groups of people captive after the Judeans refuse to pay taxes or [tribute](#) to Babylonia and then he appoints Zedekiah, the previous king's uncle, as the governor, signalling the beginning of Babylonian control over Judea. This 2nd captivity started the period of Ezekiel's captivity. (Eze. 40:1)

The 3rd captivity of Judah started in about [587 BC](#), when Jerusalem and the Temple were burned down by Nebuchadnezzar's army, leaving them in complete desolation. Only a few of the poor were left in Jerusalem at this time. This destruction took place in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar. (Jeremiah 52:12-16)

There are several periods of 70 years during this captivity time frame. Only one likely fulfills the criteria of Jeremiah 25 & 29. That fulfilment is the 70 years period of time between the 1st captivity of Judah and the release of the Judean captives by Cyrus of Persia. (2 Chr. 36:22; Eze. 1:1, 7; 3:7; 4:3, 5; 5:13, 17; 6:3, 14; Isa. 44:28; 45:1;)

This 70 years counts from the Battle of Carchemish (1st captivity of Judah) until Jerusalem was allowed to be reconstructed by the Decree of Cyrus around [538 BC](#).

To make up for the several years' difference (605 to 538 is 67 years) some propose adjusting of the chronology slightly, or count 70 lunar years (lunar years being slightly shorter than solar years), or propose that 70 was a rounded number under inclusive reckoning. Others shift the termination event until the rebuilding actually began, one or two years later.

It should be noted here that the date of 538 B.C. for the first year of Cyrus is based on the work of Ptolemy. Ptolemy does not give specific astronomical data to fix the date of the 1st year of Cyrus as he does with many of the other Babylonian and Persian kings. The Babylonian dynastic tablet gives 194.3 years from Yukin-Zira to the overthrow of Nabonidos. The 1st year of Yukin-Zira is astronomically fixed to the year 731 B.C. This then

would make the overthrow of Nabonidos in the year 537 B.C. and the 1st year of Cyrus as ruler of Babylon in the year 536 B.C. Which would then would make the 2nd year of Cyrus (when the 2nd Temple foundation was laid-- Ezra 3:8) 70 years from the 1st captivity of Judah.

Some other 70 year periods are as follows:

From the destruction of Jerusalem in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar until the Temple was fully rebuilt in the sixth year of [Darius I](#) (Hystaspes), producing a time frame of 586-516 BC or 70 years. (Jer. 52;12-14; Ezra 6:15)

The 70 year period of Divine indignation mentioned in Zechariah 1:12. This period of 70 years ended in the 2nd year of Darius I (Hystaspes) 520 B.C. This Divine anger began when the glory of God left the Temple and Jerusalem. According to Ezekiel 8-10 this took place in the 6th year and 6th month of his captivity or the 2nd captivity of Judah, which would have been the year 590 B.C.

It goes something like this...

- [God gives a burden](#)...his heartfelt concern...a deep caring
- [His burden draws us to pray](#)...intimacy with God
- [Prayer](#) brings [Action](#)...spiritual, personal, material, relational
- [Action](#) means [Involvement](#)
- [Involvement](#) means [Change](#)
- [Change](#) causes [Improvement and Growth](#)

"Like many since his time, Nehemiah's greatness came from asking great things of a great God and attempting great things in reliance on him."

445 BC Nehemiah learned of conditions in Jerusalem and requested a leave of absence from Artaxerxes.

444BC He led the Jews to Jerusalem. Repairs on the wall of Jerusalem began. The Jews completed rebuilding the walls. Nehemiah promoted spiritual renewal among the returnees.

WRITER AND DATE

The use of the first person identifies the author as Nehemiah, the governor of the Persian province of Judah (1:1—2:20; 13:4-31). His name means "Yahweh has comforted" or "Yahweh comforts."

The mention of Darius the Persian in 12:22 probably refers to Darius II, the successor of Artaxerxes I (Longimanus).¹ Darius ruled from 423-404 B.C. The text refers to an event that took place in Darius' reign (12:22). Therefore Nehemiah must have written the book sometime after that reign began. Since there are no references to Nehemiah's age in the text, it is hard to estimate how long he may have lived. When the book opens, he was second in command under King Artaxerxes (cf. Daniel). If he was 40 years old then and 41 when he reached Jerusalem in 444 B.C., he would have been 62 years old in 423 B.C. when Darius replaced Artaxerxes. Consequently he probably wrote the book not long after 423 B.C., most likely before 400 B.C.²

1. The news concerning Jerusalem 1:1-3
2. The response of Nehemiah 1:4-11

SCOPE

The years of history the book covers are 445-431 B.C. or perhaps a few years after that.

In 445 B.C. (the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign, 1:1) Nehemiah learned of the conditions in Jerusalem that led him to request permission to return to Judah (2:5). He arrived in Jerusalem in 444 B.C. and within 52 days had completed the rebuilding of the city walls (6:15).

In 432 B.C. Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes (13:6). He came back to Jerusalem after that, probably in a year or so. The record of his reforms following that return is in the last chapter of this book. Apparently Nehemiah completed all of them in just a few weeks or months.

Even though the book spans about 15 years, most of the activity Nehemiah recorded took place in 445-444 B.C. (chs. 1—12) and in 432-431 B.C. (ch. 13).

The focus of restoration activities in Nehemiah is on the walls of Jerusalem. In Ezra it was the altar of burnt offerings and especially the temple in Jerusalem.

The walls of the city had lain in ruins since 586 B.C. At that time Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, breached them, entered Jerusalem, burned the temple, carried most of the remaining Jews off to Babylon, and knocked the walls down. Consequently the few Jews who remained could not defend themselves (2 Kings 25:1-11). The returned exiles had attempted to rebuild the walls in or shortly after 458 B.C., but that project failed because of local opposition (Ezra 4:12, 23).

The returned exiles had received permission to return to their land and to reestablish their unique national institutions as much as possible. Therefore they needed to rebuild the city walls to defend themselves against anyone who might want to interfere with and to interrupt their way of life.

1. The news concerning Jerusalem 1:1-3

The month Chisleu (v. 1) corresponds to our late November and early December. The year in view was the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign (i.e., 445-444 B.C.). Susa (or Shushan, in Hebrew) was a winter capital of Artaxerxes (cf. Esth. 1:2). The main Persian capital at this time was Persepolis.

Hanani (v. 2) seems to have been Nehemiah's blood brother (cf. 7:2). The escape in view refers to the Jews' escape back from captivity in Babylon. Even though they received official permission to return, Nehemiah seems to have regarded their departure from Babylon as an escape since the Babylonians had originally forced them into exile against their wills.

The news that Nehemiah received evidently informed him of the Jews' unsuccessful

attempts to rebuild Jerusalem's walls in 458 B.C. (Ezra 4:23).

"It was an ominous development, for the ring of hostile neighbors round Jerusalem could now claim royal backing. The patronage which Ezra had enjoyed (cf. Ezra 7:21-26) was suddenly in ruins, as completely as the city walls and gates. Jerusalem was not only disarmed but on its own."⁶

2. The response of Nehemiah 1:4-11

Nehemiah's reaction to this bad news was admirable. He made it a subject of serious prolonged prayer (vv. 4, 11; 2:1). Daniel had been another high-ranking Jewish official in the Persian government, and he too was a man of prayer.

"Of the 406 verses in the book, the prayers fill 46 verses (11%), and the history accounts for 146 (36%). The various lists . . . add up to 214 verses or 53% of the total."⁷

Nehemiah began his prayer with praise for God's greatness and His loyal love for His people (v. 5). As Ezra had done, he acknowledged that the Jews had been guilty of sinning against God (cf. Ezra 9:6-7). They had disobeyed the Mosaic Law (v. 7). Nehemiah reminded God of His promise to restore His people to their land if they repented (vv. 8-9; cf. Deut. 30:1-5). He also noted that these were the people Yahweh had redeemed from Egyptian slavery for a special purpose (v. 10; cf. Deut. 9:29). He concluded with a petition that his planned appeal to the king would be effective (v. 11a).

"With the expression *this man* at the end of the prayer Nehemiah shows the big difference between his reverence for his God and his conception of his master, the Persian king. In the eyes of the world Artaxerxes was an important person, a man with influence, who could decide on life or death. In the eyes of Nehemiah, with his religious approach, Artaxerxes was just a man like any other man. The Lord of history makes the decisions, not Artaxerxes."⁸

"Although he is a layperson, he stands with the great prophets in interceding for his people and in calling them to be faithful to the Sinai covenant."⁹

Extrabiblical references that mention the office of cupbearer in the Persian court have revealed that this was a position second only in authority to the king (v. 11b).¹⁰ Nehemiah

was not only the chief treasurer and keeper of the king's signet ring, but he also tasted the

king's food to make sure no one had poisoned it (Tobit 1:22).¹¹

"The cupbearer . . . in later Achaemenid times was to exercise even more influence than the commander-in-chief."¹²

"From varied sources it may be assumed that Nehemiah as a royal cupbearer would probably have had the following traits: **1.** He would have been well trained in court etiquette (cf. Dan. 1:4-5). **2.** He was probably a handsome individual (cf. Dan. 1:4, 13, 15). **3.** He would certainly know how to select the wines to set before the king. . . . **4.** He would have to be a convivial companion to the king with a willingness to lend an ear at all times. . . . **5.** He would be a man of great influence as one with the closest access to the king, and one who could well determine who could see the king. **6.** Above all, Nehemiah had to be an individual who enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king."¹³

Some commentators have concluded that Nehemiah as cupbearer must have been a eunuch.¹⁴ This opinion rests on the translation of the Greek word *eunouchos* ("eunuch") instead of *oinochoos* ("cupbearer") in one version of the Septuagint. However this rendering appears to have been an error in translation since the Hebrew word means cupbearer.¹⁵

"Like many since his time, Nehemiah's greatness came from asking great things of a great God and attempting great things in reliance on him."¹⁶

3. The request of Nehemiah 2:1-8

Nehemiah prayed for four months about conditions in Jerusalem before he spoke to Artaxerxes about them (cf. 1:1; 2:1). Artaxerxes' reign began in the seventh Jewish month, Tishri (late September and early October), of 464 B.C.¹⁷ Therefore Nehemiah presented his request in late March or early April of 444 B.C.

Nehemiah was probably very fearful (v. 2) because Artaxerxes could have interpreted sadness in his presence as dissatisfaction with the king (cf. Esth. 4:2).¹⁸

Nehemiah's Prayer

1 The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah:

In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, ²Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem.

³They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."

⁴When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. ⁵Then I said:

"LORD, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including

myself and my father's family, have committed against you. ⁷We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

⁸"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, ⁹but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

¹⁰"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. ¹¹Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."

I was cupbearer to the king.