



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 25:08:2010

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Study 1: DIVINE FAITHFULNESS FROM HISTORICAL RECORDS

Nehemiah 1 – 13

In the original Hebrew manuscript, the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther appear as one book. As books of the Bible are not arranged in Chronological order, it is always important to examine the time period events took place so as to not only gain accurate perspectives but also uncover divine order that can inspire our faith and confidence in God. In this study we take a brief look at the chronology and content of this significant book.

CHRONOLOGY

The book centers on the Babylonian captivity of Israel. Jeremiah who ministers around 629-588 BC prophesied that Israel would be taken captive for 70 years as judgment for their disobedience and failure to observe the yearly Sabbath for 490 years. This prophecy found fulfilment during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. The events in the book of Daniel all took place during this captivity. It is interesting that the events in chapter one of Daniel took place around 607 BC and that Daniel's prayer in chapter 9 occurred around 538 BC – the same year that Cyrus made a decree for the return of the Jewish captives to Jerusalem after 70 years in captivity. ***What a faithful God we serve!*** The events in Nehemiah took place nearly ninety-three years after the first returnees to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel. The table below documents the main events in this period and enables us to have a clearer perspective of developments.

Year (B.C)	Main Events
607	Daniel – a captive in Babylon (Daniel 1).
539	Cyrus comes to power in Babylon
538	Daniel prays for fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (Daniel 9)
538	Cyrus' decree; first returnees to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel
530	Accession of Cambyses II to the throne
522	Accession of Darius I
516	Completion of Temple
486	Accession of Xerxes I
c. 486 – 480	Events of the book of Esther
465	Accession of Artaxerxes I
458	Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem
445	Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem
444	Completion of the wall of Jerusalem
433	Nehemiah returns to Babylon
?	Nehemiah makes subsequent, undated visit to Jerusalem

Your Spiritual Welfare Is Our Concern

CONTENT

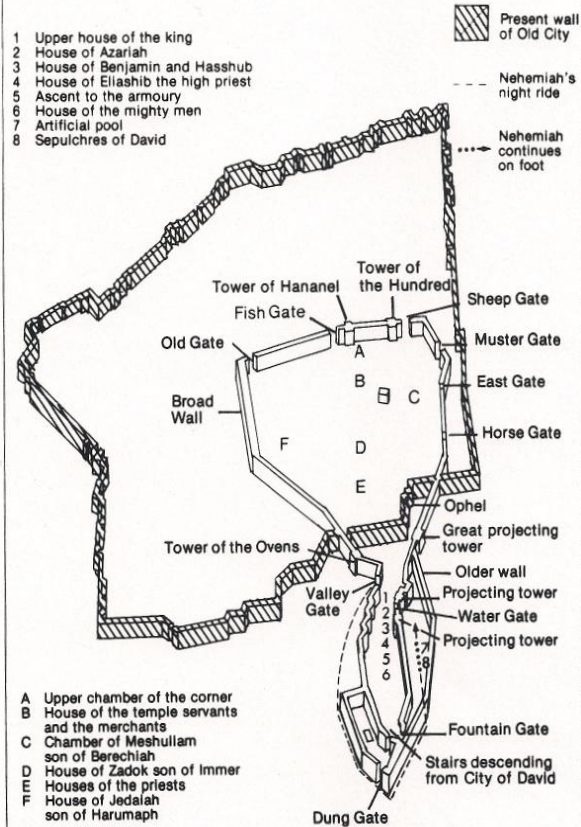
The word Nehemiah means '**Jehovah has consoled**'! – What an accurate picture of divine faithfulness as reflected in the content of the book. The book begins with the plight of God's people in the Promised Land and gradually unfolds with events that clearly depict divine intervention in human affairs. It documents the amazing story of how the walls of Jerusalem (see map on page 3) were rebuilt in an amazing 52 days despite intense opposition.

CONCLUSIONS

A number of conclusions may be drawn from this study, including:

1. Sin will never go unpunished. The failure to observe Sabbath for 490 years was eventually punished. Justice delayed is never justice denied. Their sins caught up with them, as it will all sinners – “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out (Numbers 32:23).
2. God's word both regarding the captivity and the deliverance were fulfilled at their time despite opposition, activities of false prophets and circumstances. God is God and will always do what He says. He watches over His word to perform it. “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them” (Isaiah 34:16).
3. God's clock may tick slowly but it ticks surely!
4. Carnal methods and worldly wisdom will bring ruin, therefore in dark times keep on trusting and obeying the Lord. “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow” (Isaiah 50:10,11).
5. “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).
6. Obedience brings miracles “His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:5).

JERUSALEM IN NEHEMIAH'S DAY



The diagram above is adapted from *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, N Hillyer (Ed), Inter-Varsity Press and redrawn by David Simon, Edinburgh.