

Nehemiah and the Restoration of Israel

INTRODUCTION

1. Nehemiah
 - a. Son of Hachaliah (1:1), brother of Hanani (1:2)
 - b. His father had not taken advantage of the permission to return to the fatherland, perhaps withheld by possessions or honors in the land of captivity.
 - c. Apparently of the tribe of Judah, since his forefathers were buried in Jerusalem (2:3)
 - d. He was cupbearer to King Artaxerxes Longimanus (1:11) in the royal palace in Susa (1:1).
 - e. In the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (446B.C.), he obtained permission from the king to go to Jerusalem and act as governor.
 - f. Actively engaged for twelve years in promoting the public good of Jerusalem, he remained there until 434 B.C.
 - g. New abuses that arose after his departure brought Nehemiah back to Jerusalem where he effected more reforms.
 - h. Of the place and time of his death nothing is known.

2. Authorship of the Book
 - a. Usually attributed to Nehemiah (1:1)
 - b. Since the middle part is different in style, some say more than one writer was employed.
 - c. Yet, the same feature occurs in other Bible books.
 - d. Nehemiah included lists of names from public records.
 - e. No compelling evidence suggests that anyone other than Nehemiah wrote the book bearing his name.

3. The Date of Writing
 - a. The events of chapter thirteen are tied to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes (13:6).
 - b. Scholars assume that Nehemiah wrote the book within a year or two after the final matters that are discussed in the book.
 - c. Supposing that he wrote it some ten years before his death and thirty years after his first visit to Jerusalem, we arrive at the date of 415 B.C. which would make it possible for him to relate and describe all that is in the book of Nehemiah.

4. Object
 - a. To describe what Nehemiah did with Ezra in restoring Israel
 - b. His work was a continuation of the work of Zerubbabel the prince, Joshua the high priest, and Ezra the scribe.
 - c. His book was a continuation and completion of the book of Ezra.
 - d. Therefore, the object of the book of Nehemiah was to show how the people of Israel after their return from the Babylonian captivity were, by the instrumentality of Nehemiah, fully re-established in the land of promise.

5. Background

a. The Samaritans

- 1) A race that developed from the resettlement of Israel by the Assyrians (2 Kings 17:24-41).
- 2) Along with their pagan idolatry, they also worshiped God.
- 3) They were not recognized by the Jews as having any part in God's inheritance.
- 4) They were bitterly hostile to the Hebrews.
- 5) Sanballat was their chief at the time of Nehemiah.

b. The Hebrews

- 1) Judea was thinly populated by their returning from exile.
- 2) Their city, Jerusalem, was an open village, exposed to all attacks of its neighbors.
- 3) The rebuilding of the temple was still unfinished.

c. The Persians

- 1) Led by Artaxerxes I (surnamed Longimanus because of his long hands)
- 2) Their kingdom was at its zenith.

d. The Romans

- 1) Herodotus flourished in 450 B.C.
- 2) The empire was rising in power.

e. The Greeks

- 1) Socrates, Xenophon, and Thucydides were contemporaries of Nehemiah.
- 2) Plato was born in 429 B.C., about fourteen years before Nehemiah's probable time of death.