

Nehemiah: A Chapter-by-Chapter Study

Introduction

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book, then later separated into 1 and 2 Ezra. It has only been within the past 1000 years that Nehemiah has been recognized as its own book. The events of Nehemiah begin at 445 BC. Nehemiah is a resident of Persia where the Jews are still slaves since the time of Jeremiah (590 BC), Daniel (540 BC) and Esther (473 BC). Artaxerxes is the ruler of Persia. He is the younger son of Xerxes, the ruler during the time of Esther and Mordecai. Xerxes was murdered by the captain of the guard and Artaxerxes is then raised by that same captain. Artaxerxes then kills the captain in hand-to-hand combat.

Artaxerxes rule is mostly peaceful with the exception of a few rebellions by some of his brothers. His desire to keep the peace extended to the Jewish population and Nehemiah found favor in the kings' eyes as a servant in the palace.

The Jews have been in captivity for more than a hundred years. Estimates put the number of Jews at between 2 and 3 million. The northern kingdom of Israel is long gone, and the kingdom of Judah is all but abandoned. Jerusalem is now a ghost town. Ezra (458 BC) is allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The surrounding enemies are not amused. This becomes a trial. Most Jews have already become accustomed to life in Persia as this is the only life they've known. Ezra returns to Jerusalem with only 50000 of the Jews and those numbers are too small to fend off their enemies.

The Jews that remain attempt many times to rebuild the wall and the city but are defeated by various nations that have no desire to see the return of the Jews. In this last attempt some Jews escape with their lives and seek refuge in Persia among their captive brethren. It is here that the book of Nehemiah begins.

Chapter 1

V1-3

What can we tell about Nehemiah from this introduction?

We see in the first verse that Nehemiah is an important figure in the Persian empire as he not only lives in the capital, but he lives in the palace.

What is the month of Kislev?

Kislev is the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar around November and December.

Nehemiah consults with Hanani who is an escaped survivor of the latest attempts to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The remaining Jews in Jerusalem live in fear of their lives from attacks from their enemies.

V4-11

Nehemiah has never seen Jerusalem, but this is where his heart is at. He weeps for Jerusalem, he mourns for Jerusalem. With the favor of Xerxes and Artaxerxes, the Jews have been allowed to openly practice their religion and worship God. This has strengthened many Jews including Nehemiah.

Nehemiah turns to God in his mourning and he prays a long, heartfelt and humble prayer. Nehemiah is a practicing Jew to a loving God, and he puts his trust in God now.

V5-7 is the opening of his prayer with utmost humility. V8-10 is Nehemiah recounting the promises of God to Moses. He is counting on those promises being upheld. In verse 11 he is begging God to listen and to grant favor to him so that he may be successful in rebuilding and fortifying Jerusalem.

Nehemiah ends this chapter with his position and title in the Persian empire. As the cupbearer, he would be close to the king and most likely on friendly terms. No king wants a distrusting cupbearer.

What is a cupbearer?

Because a king would be under constant threat of assassination attempts and political coups, the king would have to have trusted personnel close to him. Bodyguards, advisors and even personal servants would all be well known to the king and more than likely on friendly terms to some degree. Some cupbearers were even considered family to kings. The cupbearer didn't just mean that this person held the cup that the king used, although that was a small part of the job. The cupbearer would taste all food and drink brought before the king to ensure that it wasn't poisoned. And not just free of poison but that it also tasted good and was worthy of being brought before the king. The cupbearer was often the person who selected the meals for the king and for any banquets in the palace. He would also serve as a bodyguard oftentimes armed with a dagger. Because of the amount of time spent in close proximity to the king, the cupbearer would often be one of the closest advisors and even closest friends of the king. We do not know the nature of the relationship between Nehemiah and Artaxerxes from these verses, but it is safe to say there is some trust there.

Chapter 2

V1

This indicates that a period of 4 months had passed since Nehemiah first heard the news from Hanani. This date is also significant for another reason.

Read Daniel 9:25-27.

In this passage from Daniel, does it say weeks or years?

In Daniel, the Hebrew word for week is 'shabau' which can be translated to 7 days, but also a count of 7 years or even just a generic count of '7'. There are many examples of this throughout the old testament. If the math is correct in Daniel 9, then the total amount of time given is 173,880 days.

What is the month of Nisan?

The month of Nisan is a Jewish reference to the first month of the year and is also used by the Assyrian/Babylonian culture to refer to a month in spring when barley is ripe.

Look up "173880 days". What comes up?

Look up April 6, 32 AD. What day does that fall on?

The beginning of the second chapter of Nehemiah occurs during the month of Nisan. In 445 BC, Nisan began on March 14. If you add the 173,880 days to the date in Nehemiah it comes out to April 6, 32 AD which is Palm Sunday in the year 32.

V2-3

It was often forbidden for anyone to be sad in the presence of a king. It would have been considered an insult to the royalty. Artaxerxes notices the sorrow of his cupbearer but instead of feeling insulted, he feels concern. Nehemiah, although probably close to the king personally, still had a duty to fulfill and being sad was not becoming of his profession. But instead of trying to wash over his sadness, he is honest with the king and God begins his work through Nehemiah and the king.

V4-8

In verse 5, Nehemiah asks not to go to Judah, but for the king to send him to Judah. This gets the king involved and gives him a stake in the success of rebuilding Jerusalem.

In verse 6, the king asks how long this will take. Nehemiah has spent the past 4 months in prayer and coming up with a plan on what to do. When the king asks for a timeframe, Nehemiah is ready with an answer. In verses 7 and 8, Nehemiah not only knows how long this will take, but he also knows that he will need safe passage and supplies for the job at hand.

V9-10

Sanballat and Tobiah are ruling governors of the Persian provinces that Judah is in. They have no problem with the temple in Jerusalem, but neither of them wishes to see the city become strong again as this may be a threat to their leadership and status. At this point they were very suspicious of what was going on since they saw the timber being shipped in under the king's army and horsemen.

V11-16

The remnants of Jews in Jerusalem were small in number and open to attack because of the lack of the fortifications. The temple was there, but it was not as magnificent or beautiful as it once had been. When Nehemiah arrived with armies and workers, he would have been noticed. Still, he told no one why he was there. He wanted to see Jerusalem for himself. This was his first time seeing it.

Nehemiah spent three days assessing the city and determining what to do and where to start. He did not just jump right in and start up. He continued to evaluate and plan.

V17-18

After he fully comprehends the extent of the work to be done, Nehemiah then lets it be known why he is there and tells the Jewish inhabitants what must happen. Nehemiah lets them know that he is there because he is one of them and that he is there with them, not to tell them what to do. He also tells them that they have the king's support. The leaders not only agree but seem enthusiastic about this new venture.

V19-20

Tobiah and Sanballat hear of what is happening and show their disdain. They try to discourage Nehemiah and the inhabitants by asking if the king knows what is happening. Nehemiah is not discouraged. He also does not yet disclose that he has the king's support. Instead, he puts God first and lets them know that they have God's support first and foremost.

Why does Nehemiah rebuke the two governors in this manner?

Tobiah and Sanballat are Jews, but Nehemiah lets them know they have no place here. Even though they are of the chosen people, they are not doing the will of God nor are they in his favor.

What does Tobiah mean in Hebrew?

The name loosely translated means “servant of God”.

Chapter 3

V1-2

Chapter 3 is basically a blueprint of the work that went on and who did what. The fact that this is longer than the first two chapters indicates how much work was going on and how important it was.

Why is Eliashib mentioned first?

Eliashib is the high priest in Jerusalem. He is also the first worker mentioned. How many CEO's, managers, politicians, or other kind of leaders do you know that are the first in line to do manual labor? Eliashib was a leader by example, not just by words.

What is the Sheep Gate?

This is the gate where shepherds brought their flocks in and out of the city.

What is consecration?

Consecration means to set apart, to recognize as something special. The first work done on the wall was set apart for God.

V3-5

What is the Fish Gate?

The fish gate is the entrance to the marketplace where fishermen would bring their catches in for trade.

Who are the Tekoite Nobles?

The Tekoites helped in the work but the wealthy or people of nobility thought they were above the manual labor being performed. This is the first group of people to be recognized for *not* doing the work.

V6-12

What is the Old Gate?

The Old Gate, also called the Jeshanah Gate is the northern gate.

In verse 8, it mentions that goldsmiths and even perfumers were helping with the repairs. This was something that people from all different walks of life helped in regardless of their profession.

There is another gate called Ephraim's Gate next to the Old Gate, but Nehemiah leaves that out of his recordings for some reason.

What is the Broad Wall?

The Broad Wall was exactly what it sounds like. It was over 20 feet wide. For a long time, historians denied the feasibility of the wall and claimed the Bible as inaccurate in describing it this way. Archeologists in Jerusalem would later uncover remnants of the Broad Wall and confirm just how accurate it was.

In verse 9 an important city official is named as having helped built. He was not above the manual labor involved.

What is the Tower of Furnaces or Tower of Ovens?

It is most likely named because of its proximity to the bread makers of the market place.

In verse 11, a man named Malchijah is mentioned. This same man is also mentioned in the book of Ezra. He is rebuked for having taken a pagan wife. Although he was rebuked several years earlier, he did not let his past sins keep him from doing the good work now in front of him.

V13-14

What is the Valley Gate?

The Valley Gate opened to the Tyropean Valley

What is the Refuse Gate or Dung Gate?

This opened to the area where the inhabitants of Jerusalem would dump their garbage and waste.

V15-25

What is the Fountain Gate?

The Fountain Gate is near the Pool of Siloam where Jesus would heal a blind woman hundreds of years later.

V26-27

Before reading, ask if anyone has ever had any experience where they had to do more work because someone else wasn't doing their job. How did you react to that? What was your attitude?

What is the Water Gate?

There is a tunnel called the Tunnel of Hezekiah or the Tunnel of Siloam where the water from the Gihon Spring flows to the Pool of Siloam. This entire waterway was inside the gates of Jerusalem and could provide water for the inhabitants during a siege.

Notice that the Tekoites are mentioned as repairing another section. Their nobles did not do any work, so they made up for it by repairing two sections of wall. Whatever their own feelings or attitudes were, the Tekoites were honorable in their actions.

V28-32

What is the Horse Gate?

In ancient times the horse had only one purpose. Camels and donkeys were used for transportation. Sheep and cattle were used for meat, wool, leather and milk. The horse was used for war. This would be the gate that the cavalry and chariots of Jerusalem rode in and out of.

What is the East Gate?

This is also known as the Golden Gate. This is the gate that Jesus entered Jerusalem through on Palm Sunday before the crucifixion.

What is the Inspection Gate?

This gate is known as the Muster Gate, the Inspection Gate or the Gate of Judgement. It is where the troops would be inspected before leaving the city.

The Four Home Builders

This chapter also mentions men who built the wall in front of their own homes. There were several mentioned, but one commentator dug a little deeper into this meaning and found four that stood out. Nehemiah chose people to build the wall who had a vested interest in it. These people would essentially be protecting their own homes. This shows the intelligence and cunning of Nehemiah. It is also a lesson for us as a church. Our own homes should be in good repair before we start doing the work of God in other places.

V10 – Jedaiah means ‘He who calls unto God’. Our homes must be a place of prayer

V23 – Benjamin means ‘Son of my right hand’. Our homes must be places of protection and peace.

V29 – Zadok means ‘Justice’. Our homes must be places of fairness, justice and integrity.

V30 – Meshullam means ‘Devoted’. Our homes must be places devoted to God.

Chapter 4

V1-3

Tobiah and Sanballat return and mock the Jews as they are building and repairing. At this point the wall is not yet halfway done and the workers are weary and could be discouraged very easily.

V4-6

Do you think Nehemiah’s prayer is harsh? Why or why not?

Nehemiah doesn’t talk back to them or return their insults. He instead takes his concerns to God in prayer as he has done so many times before. He knows that the work of God is being done and that these two are mocking it so instead of seeking his own vengeance out of anger he asks God to seek vengeance. Just as David did with Goliath.

V7-9

When the wall reaches the halfway point, the enemies go from mockery to treachery. They begin to plot against Jerusalem. Nehemiah is not discouraged. He continues to pray but he also takes measures to ensure safety.

V10-12

Verse 10 shows the attack of Satan from the inside. Verses 11 and 12 show the attacks from the outside. In verse 10, Judah means the leaders from the tribe of Judah. Judah is supposed to be the strongest and bravest tribe and is even the lineage of Jesus. Because of this, the issued statement is especially discouraging.

What is the rubbish in verse 10?

The rubbish referred to is the remnants of the old wall. Instead of building on what was already there, it was being removed and rebuilt completely. Parts of the old wall might have been reused, but the new wall needed a new foundation and there was no telling how sturdy the remnants were. In order to continue the work, what couldn't be used had to be discarded.

Verses 11 and 12 talk of the enemies of Jerusalem waiting for an opportune moment to strike. But not all Jews lived inside the city walls and those that were able supplied knowledge of the plans of their enemies.

What does the phrase 'they told us ten times' mean?

This statement meant that Nehemiah heard repeatedly from different informants that trouble was coming.

V13-14

Nehemiah goes from setting a watch to having armed guards at the weakest points. He reminds his people that they are doing God's work first and foremost, but that they are also defending their families. Notice that Nehemiah doesn't mention anything about Artaxerxes or the army he brought with him. He is trusting solely in God.

V15-18

The enemies saw the readiness of the people. They did not want a battle, they wanted an easy victory. With the defenses of Jerusalem in place and armed guards at the ready the enemies shrunk away. Seeing this, Nehemiah decides that even though this will slow the work at least the work will continue. From this point forward Jerusalem has armed guards at the ready. Even the workers were armed which would impede the work, but the work could still be carried out.

V19-23

Everyone including Nehemiah was always on guard and at the ready. This would be tedious and wearisome, but necessary for the wall to be completed. With the work going on and the close proximity of the workers imagine the smell! The only time people were not on guard or at the ready was when their clothes were being washed.

Chapter 5

V1

Problems within: this chapter deals with some of the ordeals of the people placed upon them by fellow Jews.

V2-5

There were several things going against the building of the wall. In chapter 4 most attacks came from the outside. In chapter 5 the attacks will be hardships and greed. There was a famine in the land which caused the price of food to go up. Taxes still had to be paid even though they were not working their own jobs and the cost of living had gone up. Since most of the Jews were working on the wall they did not have time to do their own work, mind their own fields, livestock or fish. Most of them ended up selling their land or even their children to other Jews who were exploiting the situation! The rich Jews,

even those performing work on the walls were lending money at high interest rates to the poor and when the debt couldn't be paid taking land or indentured servants.

V6

This verse speaks for itself. Nehemiah was ticked. They had fended off external enemies and now work on the wall was being halted due to strife from within.

V7-11

What does the word 'usury' mean?

Nehemiah does not act on his anger. He knows a wrong has been committed but he meditates on it first. Sometimes our anger can misguide our decisions and Nehemiah was well aware of this.

Nehemiah calls the rich Jews together and calls them out. He tells them to not only stop what they are doing but to repay what they have taken.

V12-13

Those accused agreed to do what Nehemiah said. They accepted the rebuke without much fuss. How hard is it for you to admit a mistake you made? Even though Nehemiah saw their willingness to accept the rebuke he still called for the priests to come in and make a public record of them saying they will repay those who they deceived. To their credit, they did as they promised.

V14-16

What is Nehemiah talking about here? What are the 'governor's provisions'?

Nehemiah as a representative to the king and a guest in a ruled city could charge a tax of food and money to the residents for his stay in their city. The people had to pay for a royal visit! But Nehemiah did not do this. In fact, Nehemiah and all of his servants were there to work on the wall, not put a burden on the people. Imagine the people having to pay a tax for Nehemiah and his entourage for twelve years.

V17-18

Some of Nehemiah's supplies were food and livestock for a royal visit and all of the supporting cast that that would entail. Also, some of the army or servants that Nehemiah brought with him would be hunters and search for food. Nehemiah could have kept this food for he and his servants, but instead he opened his table to 150 Jews every night. Not only did he not demand a tax for his visit, he gave of the provisions that he had. He knew his leadership could easily be questioned if he didn't lead by example.

V19

Nehemiah ends this chapter with a prayer. It could be said that Nehemiah is bragging here, but there are several factors to consider. One, he is in a position of leadership and everything he does can be scrutinized in the public eye. Two, he is setting an example of good leadership. These are qualities that he has witnessed or experienced somewhere and he is living by these examples and displaying for others to learn from. Three, the book of Nehemiah started out as his own personal diary. He was not writing for display, he was writing as a matter of record. It is highly likely that no one read this book until well after these events took place.

Chapter 6

V1-4

The enemies are watching the progress and as they see the wall nearing completion they make several last-ditch attempts to stop Nehemiah.

V5-9

After the last four failed attempts, Sanballat tries his hand at slander to see if that will stop Nehemiah. Nehemiah is still the servant of the king of Persia and Sanballat is still a governor so instead of physical harm, Sanballat tries political sabotage. Nehemiah is already close to the king and knows that he has the king's backing.

V10-14

Instead of threats, the governor's resort to scare tactics. Since the wall was almost complete Nehemiah had little to fear. So when Shemaiah informs Nehemiah of a secret plan to kill him and he should hide in the safest place in the city, the temple, Nehemiah sees through the attempt at getting him to sin against God by desecrating the temple. Nehemiah records his prayer for God to remember Tobiah and Sanballat.

V15-16

It took a total of 52 days to complete the wall. This is a remarkable feat and one that spoke volumes to the enemies of Jerusalem. Remember that Nehemiah spent four months in prayer before he received permission from the king to rebuild Jerusalem. He spent longer in prayer than rebuilding the wall!

V17-19

Nehemiah describes some of the issues concerning Tobiah. Tobiah had friends in Jerusalem among the nobles because of family ties. Many of these nobles tried to persuade Nehemiah to listen to Tobiah, but Nehemiah would have none of it.

Chapter 7

V1-2

What are the singers and Levites for?

Now that the city defenses were in place, the Jews could freely worship. Along with appointing guards and gatekeepers, leaders of worship would also be appointed.

Nehemiah refers to Hanani as his brother which is the first time Nehemiah has mentioned this. This is the same Hanani from chapter 1. Hananiah as the leader of the citadel would be co-leader or co-governor of Jerusalem.

V3

Nehemiah is still proceeding with caution as he sets the city gates to be opened late in the day and closed early in the evening. A watch would still be set to protect the city even with the walls standing.

V4-5

Jerusalem still needed to be tended to even after the walls were up. The once large and full city of Jerusalem was still mostly empty. So Nehemiah found the census that Ezra took in Ezra 2:1-70 and took his own census to compare.

V6-65: The Census

Read in sections:

6-38

39-56

57-65

In verse 7 the name Nahamani appears but is left out of Ezra's account. In verse 10 the people of Ara number 652, but Ezra counts 775. One possible explanation is that the larger number was the count when the people left, and some died on the journey.

V66-73: The Totals

This is the final tally of all the people and livestock in Jerusalem. The last verse is a reminder that this isn't about rebuilding the walls, but about keeping the people of Jerusalem safe. The walls are a means to an end, not the goal.

Chapter 8

V1-3

What is a scribe?

A scribe is one who copies the Word of God onto parchment, scrolls, or other forms of paper for distribution to the priests. It was tedious work and scribes were held in high regard. Ezra cared about God, His Word, the temple and the city that housed it.

What is the Book of the Law of Moses?

These are the first five books of the bible attributed to Moses. The people gathered from first light until around noon to hear Ezra read these books.

V4-6

After the people were done building the wall, they still took time to build a platform and podium for Ezra to teach from. Notice the reverence the people had for the Word. When Ezra opened it, they all stood.

V7-8

Why would the people need help understanding what was read?

The original books of Moses were written in what at this time would be a very old dialect of Hebrew. This is what the 'writing on the wall' in the book of Daniel was written in. Only highly educated Jews would recognize this original language. The people were most likely broken up into groups and the Levites would go to the groups and translate for them what was read.

V9-12

Why did the people weep?

The law of Moses pointed out many faults and flaws in the way the Jews were living. They were feeling convicted by God. Ezra reminds them that it is good to feel convicted, but today is a day of celebration and a Holy day. Do good going forward and follow God for His joy is our strength. The people rejoice at this.

V13-18

The following day was a day for the leadership to gather so it was a smaller crowd. Upon their studying of the Word, they found that they were in the month of the Feast of the Seventh Month.

What is the Feast of the Seventh Month?

This is the Feast of Tabernacles. This is a remembrance how God provided for the Israelites in the desert after leaving Egypt. This feast was not a traditional feast and had not been done since the days of Joshua, but the Jews decided to keep this feast with the new wall in place. This was a seven-day long revival with a feast and celebration on the eighth day.

Chapter 9

V1-4

After the festival and revival, there is a time of repentance. The people humble themselves before God.

V5-8

The praising of the God of creation and the God of Abraham and all his descendants.

V9-15

The praising of the God who delivered the Israelites out of Egypt and who provided for them in the desert.

V16-25

A recount of the hardness and sinfulness of man despite God's goodness. God still provided for them.

V26-31

This recounts the cycle of Israel's relationship with God.

V32-37

This is the plea of the Jews: intervene and bring forgiveness

V38

The Jews write their repentance down and make a covenant with God. The covenant is recorded in chapter 10.

Chapter 10

The end of chapter 9 states that the Jews made a covenant with God. Chapter 10 is the recording of that covenant.

V1-8

Other than the name of Nehemiah, it is not known why this group of people is listed first. There are 84 names listed in all.

V9-13

These are the Levites that signed the covenant.

V14-27

These are various civic leaders that signed the covenant.

V28-31

The aforementioned people are adhering to the following covenant. *Why does verse 28 mention wives, sons, daughters and all who had an understanding?*

This makes it a public covenant so that those that make the covenant can be held accountable.

In verse 29, it is called 'a curse and an oath'. *Why is a curse involved in this?*

A covenant means that some sort of payment must be made to seal it and a bigger payment made if the covenant is broken. A covenant is usually sealed with an animal sacrifice. Most covenants spelled out the form of retribution, but this curse is left up to God as to what the punishment will be.

Verse 30 states that the first rule of the covenant is to not give away daughters to foreign husbands or take foreign sons for their daughters. *What is the significance of this?*

Some schools of thought assume that this is to keep the Jewish bloodline pure, but other theories are that this is to keep like-minded God-fearing people together, much like the new testament teaches about marriage.

Verse 31 states the second rule of the covenant. *What is the significance of this rule?*

Other than the obvious desire to keep the Sabbath holy, this also eludes to business practices. One man might wish to get ahead of a business rival, so he would be willing to break one of the ten commandments to buy extra supplies or sell ahead of the market opening. Notice that this rule states a punishment for the breaking of this vow.

V32-39

These verses state the third rule. *What is the significance of this?*

This is a commitment to supporting and supplying the work of God. It is also defined very clearly so that nothing is neglected.

Chapter 11

V1-2

Why would it be necessary to ask people to stay in the city?

Jerusalem had been a ghost town up until Ezra rebuilt the temple, but it was still sparsely populated. Most people had settled in smaller towns and had tried to establish a life for themselves. This lottery was to determine who would stay in the city to help the population grow. The leaders volunteered

themselves and then the remaining population cast lots so that ten per cent of the land of Judah would live in the city. In verse 2 it states that there were volunteers who willingly stayed to live in Jerusalem and that they were admired and blessed for doing so.

V3-9

Nehemiah begins a census of Jerusalem

These are the leaders who lived in Jerusalem. Verse 6 records 468 and verse 8 records 928.

V10-14

This is the list of priests who lived in Jerusalem. Verse 12 records 822, verse 13 records 242 and verse 14 records 128.

V15-19

The listing of Levites in Jerusalem. There were 284 Levites recorded (verse 18).

The gatekeepers numbered 172. This total comes to 3044.

V20-24

Verses 20 and 21 discuss some of the other towns and villages of Judah. Notice in verse 23 that Artaxerxes himself demanded that the singers be paid an extra stipend. This was on top of what the covenant in chapter 10 would provide.

What are the singers?

Along with, obviously, singing their job was to look after the temple and its upkeep. Maintenance, cleaning and preparation for events would all be in their charge. It is not clear why Artaxerxes favored this group, but he did.

V25-36

This is a list of the cities and towns of Judah outside of Jerusalem.

Chapter 12

The Jews up to this point had recorded their ancestry by tribes and kings. Nehemiah creates a new standard by recording the lineage of the high priests since the Jews are in captivity. This is a recording of that lineage back to Zerubbabel which would be immediately after the time of Daniel.

V1-11

Nehemiah is recounting some of the people that came with Zerubbabel back to Jerusalem from Persian captivity. Cyrus the king or, more likely, Darius the Mede, the ruler of Babylon under Cyrus made Zerubbabel the governor of Judah and allowed him to return to rebuild Jerusalem. This is somewhere around 538 BC.

V12-21

It is mostly believed that this time period would be the first generation of Jews born in Jerusalem after the return. Joiakim was the son of Jeshua who returned with Zerubbabel (v10).

V22-26

There is much dispute whether Darius the Mede is the same person as Darius the Great, but King Darius took the Persian throne in 521 BC after Zerubbabel had left for Jerusalem and the temple reconstruction had already begun. This recounting of lineage would fall in line with the previous two sections (v1-21).

V27-30

These verses are about getting back to Jewish traditions and focusing more on God. The dedication ceremony would consist of full worship with singing and instruments and a purification process which would include purifying the leaders, the people and the wall itself.

V31-43

The whole population split into two and walked in opposite directions on top of the entire wall and met in the middle worshipping and dedicating the wall to God.

V44-47

The day of dedication turned into a day of thanksgiving. People brought gifts to the temple and offered sacrifices to God.

Chapter 13

V1-3

The Jews continue to try and right themselves according to God's law. They cleanse themselves of those who are not Jewish or those who do not wish to become Jews.

In verse 2 it mentions how God turned the curse into a blessing. This is recorded in Numbers 22-24.

The Return

The closing of chapter 13 is a recording of his return to Jerusalem after 10-12 years back in the service of the king. He knows that the true test of Jerusalem will be in the long term, not just a few years of revival and rebuilding a wall. He returns to check on the Jews' progress.

V4-9

Nehemiah returns and discovers that Tobiah and his ally Eliashib have desecrated the temple by allowing Tobiah to live there. Tobiah was not supposed to even live inside the city walls anymore since he had been expelled in chapter 2.

V10-14

Nehemiah also discovers that the people did not continue in their giving to the service of God. He restores this practice.

V15-22

Nehemiah also discovers that the Sabbath is not being observed. Much like Jesus clearing out the money changers of the temple, Nehemiah goes on a mission to keep the Sabbath holy.

V23-31

Why is Nehemiah's reaction to this so much harsher than the previous dispositions?

The other sins can be corrected immediately and have little impact. Causing the Jewish bloodline to be impure cannot be corrected. Nehemiah knows that lust, sexual immorality and marrying outside of God's people can be devastating to not just one life, but many lives.

Nehemiah rightfully checks back in on his people to make sure that they stay on the straight and narrow.

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