



NEHEMIAH

Resolute Leadership Successful Service

Teaching Series, Mitford & Hebron
January-March 2019

Reading Plan

Part 1: Rebuilding the Wall

read by 20 January	Nehemiah chapter 1
3 February	chapters 2 and 3
10 February	chapter 4
17 February	chapters 5 and 6
24 February	chapter 7

Part 2: Rebuilding the People

read by 3 March	chapter 8
10 March	chapter 9
17 March	chapter 10
24 March	chapters 11,12,13

Introducing Nehemiah

Nehemiah was in leadership during an extraordinary time in Israel's history. He faced opposition from all sides - both from his own people and from outside forces. A little background will help set the stage for understanding the pressures Nehemiah faced.

From antiquity, Ezra and Nehemiah have been considered almost as one book. Together they cover a period of about 100 years. In 587BC Judah was removed from the land of Israel and deported to Babylon with only a few left in the land. In 538BC Cyrus sent some of the Jewish exiles back to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah are all wrapped up in history. Zerubbabel led the rebuilding of the Temple, Ezra brought the Law back into Israel's life and, in about 430BC, Nehemiah rebuilt the wall that made Jerusalem secure.

The amazing thing is that, under Persian rule, Israel had more autonomy than at any time of their existence as a sovereign state. Scholar Derek Kidner describes the importance of this period: *The two centuries of the Persian empire were among the most formative periods of Jewish history. Out of the ruins of the little kingdom of Judah there emerged the small community whose concern to be the people of God shaped it into the nation which meets us in the New Testament. Throughout this time the Persian régime was given a substantial part to play, both in sending and subsidizing the three expeditions of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah, and in backing their authority with its own. It was not the first empire, nor the last, to be allotted some such role.* (D. Kidner: Ezra & Nehemiah, IVP, p17)

Nehemiah's gifts in administration and perseverance enabled him to mould the people back into the 'people of God' so they could obey God's commands and become distinct from the people around them. This is where Nehemiah shines through. It was not enough just to build the wall - he had to build a people that would once again stand on their own as God led them.

God has called each of us to important tasks, both as leaders and as followers. Reading Nehemiah will help us to have the courage we need to follow through even in the face of difficulty and persecution. God be with you as you study.

[Excerpt from *Nehemiah: The Courage to Face Opposition* by Don Fields, pub. IVP 1999]