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Article 16: Nehemiah at a Glance

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NEHEMIAH AT A GLANCE

This book records the third and final freedom trips of some Jewish pilgrims from Persia to Jerusalem. Nehemiah, leader of the journey, upon arriving, shared with the Jews already there. His great burden, namely, to repair the breached walls around the holy city, which he did, the task being completed in just 52 days.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A CALL TO A WALL
THE TRUE STORY OF A MAN WITH A BURDEN TO BUILD

Nehemiah marks the end of historical chronology in the Old Testament. It is also the only completely autobiographical book in the Bible.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Nehemiah.** He led the final of three Jewish returns from Persia to Jerusalem (Neh. 2:5). His sole purpose was to rebuild the city walls destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (Neh. 6:15).
2. What? The **book of Nehemiah.**
3. When and where? 440 B.C. from Jerusalem.
4. Why? To record the rebuilding of the walls around Jerusalem.
5. To whom? The returning Jewish remnant.

KEY EVENTS

1. Nehemiah's arrival in Jerusalem and his challenge to the Jewish leaders
2. Repairing the ten main gates in the wall
3. Completion of the wall in just 52 days in spite of fierce opposition
4. The great revival beside the water gate
5. The prayer by the Levites, reviewing Israel's sin and God's grace, resulting in the signing of a special covenant

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Nehemiah:** great wall builder who rebuilt the broken down walls surrounding Jerusalem
2. **Artaxerxes II:** Persian king who befriended both Ezra and Nehemiah
3. **Sanballat, Tobiah, and Gershem:** three pagans who did everything in their power to keep Nehemiah from rebuilding the broken walls surrounding Jerusalem

KEY PLACES

1. **Shushan:** capital city of the Persian kings and original home of Nehemiah

2. **Water Gate:** one of the ten gates in the Jerusalem wall where the people gathered to hear Ezra read God's Word

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Nehemiah is the last historical book in the Old Testament.
2. Nehemiah was a younger contemporary of Ezra. Ezra was a priest and Bible teacher. His main job concerned the purification of the people of Jerusalem. Nehemiah was a politician and builder. His main job concerned the protection of the people of Jerusalem.
3. King Artaxerxes had shown kindness to Ezra some ten years before, and would also honor Nehemiah's request to return to Jerusalem. The king was the son of Xerxes and therefore a stepson of Esther. His stepmother no doubt had much influence upon Artaxerxes' attitude toward Ezra and Nehemiah.
4. The book of Nehemiah is important because: (1) it provides the only listing of the names of Jerusalem's gates in the Bible (3:1-32) and (2) it offers perhaps scripture's greatest example of how to do a successful work for God (6:3; 8:10).
5. It gives the most moving example of the value of public scripture reading in the Bible (8:1-12; 9:3).
6. Nehemiah probably demonstrated more raw zeal for God and His divine law than any other Biblical prophet (5:1-11; 13:7-28).
7. The final of 8 significant Israelite revivals occurs in the book of Nehemiah. These are:
 - During the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:3-6)
 - During the days of Rehoboam (2 Chron. 12:5-7)
 - During the days of Asa (2 Chron. 14:1-16)
 - During the days of Joash and Jehoiada (2 Chron. 23:16-21)
 - During the days of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:3-14)
 - During the days of Josiah (2 Chron. 34:3-33)
 - During the days of Ezra (Ezra 10:1-19)
 - During the days of Nehemiah (8:1-9:3)
8. The book of Nehemiah also includes the last of three great prayers of confession by a man of God concerning the sins of Israel:
 - Daniel's prayer (Dan. 9:3-19)
 - Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:5-15)
 - Nehemiah's prayer (Neh. 1:4-11)
9. Nehemiah pinpoints the starting point of Daniel's prophecy concerning the 70 weeks.
 - The prophecy: "*From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem*" (Dan. 9:25).
 - The beginning, "*Let me ... come into Judah ... to make beams for the gates ... and for the wall of the city ... and the king granted me ...*" (Neh. 2:7-8).
10. The final of six famous Old Testament teams for God is mentioned in Nehemiah. These "dynamic duos" are:
 - Moses and Aaron
 - Joshua and Caleb
 - Elijah and Elisha
 - Zerubbabel and Joshua (Ezra 3:2)

- Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1)
 - Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh. 8:9)
11. This book includes one of the most carefully planned and joyful dedicatory musical celebrations in the entire Bible (12:27-47).
 12. It also gives us the final of seven occasions when Israel entered into a special covenant with God. These are:
 - In the days of Moses (Exod. 19:5-8)
 - In the days of Joshua (Josh. 24:24, 25)
 - In the days of Jehoida the High Priest (2 Chron. 23:16)
 - In the days of King Asa (2 Chron. 15:12-15)
 - In the days of King Josiah (2 Kings 23:3)
 - In the days of Ezra (Ezra 10:3)
 - In the days of Nehemiah (Neh. 9:38)

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Ezra and 1 Kings:

- 1 Kings celebrates the dedication of the first temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 8)
- Ezra celebrates the dedication of the second temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 3)
- Nehemiah celebrates the dedication of the wall surrounding both the temple and city of Jerusalem (Neh. 12)

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Lord God of Heaven (1:5)
2. The Great Awe-Inspiring God (1:5)
3. The God of Joy and Strength (8:10)
4. The God of All Creation (9:6)
5. The Covenant Keeping God (9:7-8)
6. The God of the Exodus (9:9-25)