

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY: JERUSALEM AFTER THE EXILE

After the Israelites were freed from captivity, many of them returned to Jerusalem. Cyrus, the King of Persia, allowed the Israelites to rebuild the city and establish themselves once again.

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one combined narrative. Both Ezra and Nehemiah describe life in Jerusalem for the newly freed Israelites after their exile. Ezra focuses on the rebuilding of the temple, while Nehemiah focuses on the rebuilding of the city walls.

While Nehemiah was in Jerusalem, he faced great opposition from the surrounding nations. Israel's enemies saw Israel as a rebellious nation and objected to the rebuilding of the city walls. Despite his many struggles, Nehemiah was consistent and faithful in his quest to rebuild the city walls.

Nehemiah later heard that Jerusalem had not remained steadfast to God, despite the renewal of faith. Around the city, the work of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah was being unraveled by the Israelites. Frustrated and concerned, Nehemiah cried out to God, begging Him to remember His work and not undo the good that He had done.

MAIN IDEAS: REBUILDING THE CITY WALLS

- **Saddened by the neglect of Jerusalem, Nehemiah set out to rebuild the city walls.** (Nehemiah 1:3)
- **Nehemiah refused to be discouraged or distracted from his work.** (Nehemiah 6:3)
- **The Israelites rededicated themselves to following God's law.** (Nehemiah 9:38)
- **The Israelites failed to remain faithful and obedient.** (Nehemiah 13:18)

EXAMPLE OF GOD'S CHARACTER: RESPONDS TO PRAYER

Saddened by the news of Jerusalem's dilapidated state, Nehemiah mourned and turned to God in prayer. Nehemiah confessed the sins of the Israelites and remembered God's covenant promise. Nehemiah asked God for provision as he rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, a mission which he received from both God and King Cyrus. Nehemiah continued to pray for protection and guidance, asking God to guard the wall while they were building in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah also prayed for God to execute His divine judgment. Nehemiah asked God to judge him rightly for his kindness and generosity to the poor (Nehemiah 5:19). Similarly, Nehemiah asked God to remember Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem for their wrongdoing (Nehemiah 6:14). Instead of gaining personal glory or seeking revenge, Nehemiah trusted in God's justice system. The book ends with Nehemiah's prayer asking God to remember him as faithful and to remember those who defiled the temple and the Sabbath. It's clear that God responded to Nehemiah's prayer and preserved his story of faithfulness.



JESUS IN NEHEMIAH: THE NEW JERUSALEM

In the book of Revelation, Jesus promised a new heaven and a new earth, symbolizing God's kingdom and Jesus' eternal reign. This new kingdom is referred to as the "new Jerusalem," a place of perfect unity, justice, and harmony for all who have placed their faith in Jesus. As the Israelites aimed to rebuild and maintain the city of Jerusalem, they foreshadowed the restoration and completion that Jesus will eventually bring.

Revelation 21:5 promises that Jesus will make all things new, wiping away every tear and abolishing death, sorrow, and pain. God has plans to restore and redeem His creation, including His earthly dwelling place of Jerusalem.