

Ezra and Nehemiah continue the history of God’s dealings with Israel. Ezra picks up where Chronicles leaves off with Cyrus, the new king of Persia making decrees to allow the children of Israel to return to their land to rebuild their temple. Ezra 1-6 recount the rebuilding of the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra chapters 7-10 recount the revival under the teaching of the law by Ezra. About 40 years after the temple is rebuilt Nehemiah hears a report about the terrible condition of Jerusalem’s walls. He is given permission to return to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes and then directs the rebuilding of the walls amidst widespread opposition by enemies of God’s people. He also calls on the people to renew their covenant with God and later to deal with where they’ve “slipped” back to their old ways. Both Ezra and Nehemiah describe active, widespread opposition to their work for God.

### Ezra

3-4 After a great start (ch. 3) notice the opposition to their work in chapter 4. [Chapter 4 lists different complaints to different kings: vv. 1-3 to Cyrus; vv. 6-23 (likely parenthetical, cf. 7:1) to Artaxerxes; and v. 24 reiterating v. 5.] Notice the misrepresentation and criticism of their motives. Consider our similar battles with the world. Praise God that in spite of this Rom 8:35-37 holds true for us today.

5-6 In the days of Darius a governor asks the new king what he wants done. Two prophets intercede and support the efforts of those who want to rebuild the walls. The king’s hand is in the hand of the Lord. Praise God for his leading. The governor likely didn’t get the answer he was expecting!

7-8 Consider the degree to which Ezra committed this effort to God and the results.

9-10 Look at Ezra’s attitude toward sin. Does your attitude

### Nehemiah

- 1-2 Examine Nehemiah’s preparation of heart and his method for pursuing the great task of rebuilding the walls. Examine both his heart preparation as well as his organizational method.
- 3 Compare the “details that differ” between the various families who worked on the wall. How would we want our “work” for God remembered?
- 4-6 Look at the many different ways the work of God was opposed. List the various ways Satan inspired men to thwart God’s work. Consider our challenges for God’s work today. Our foe hasn’t slackened his offense against us! Remember again Rom 8:35-37!
- 8:1-9:3 What was used so mightily by God to reach the hearts of the people (cf. vv. 14-15)? How did they respond? What does God want us to do when we read his Word? How about James 1:22-25?
- 9:5-38 What principles do you see in this prayer that we can/should use today? How ought you to adjust your prayer life?
- 13 Notice how obedience to God’s law was pursued as soon as the need was recognized. Are you as zealous? Why? Why not? What would God have you to do?