

# THE FLORAL HEIGHTS INFORMER

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## **Our Deacons:**

**Joe Cronin**

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## **The Book of Nehemiah**

Reading the book of Nehemiah leaves us with an appreciation for a man's conviction and spiritual energy to get work accomplished. Yet if we do not pause and contemplate the historical events as a whole, we may miss out on information that will encourage us today. Nehemiah is a story of a man who understood the concept of obeying God and performing duties. He was a man who truly cared about God and His people. The modern world we live in lacks people with genuine care. We may find a charity for every known cause and find many individuals who have dedicated their lives to helping the less fortunate in this world. One may conclude that truly there is care in the modern world. Yet when one looks to the grand spiritual picture of life, death, and eternity, there seems to be a void of individuals who have genuine care. Many are too busy to care about a neighbor's soul. We as Christians often look to our own lives. We have bills to pay, investments to make, shopping to do, and entertainment to get us through this life. We look for encouragement from heroes on the big screen movies and novels of historical figures of years gone by that were viewed as successful in this world. A look at Nehemiah will not inspire me to achieve great strides in science, mathematics, theater, music, athleticism, and/or financial success. The few years of Nehemiah's life that is covered in this book will, however, help me to see that if I try in this life, I can make a spiritual difference in the lives of others. Nehemiah was a man who recognized that when the duty of God's laws call, we have no recourse but to follow the divine instructions. The message of the book is that no matter who seeks to discourage me from doing God's work, I must perform my duty.

### **Date of Book**

Nehemiah was a Jewish captive and served as the cup bearer to King Artaxerxes during the twentieth year of his reign (444 BC / see notes below at Kings of Persia) (Neh. 1:11; 2:1). We know that this is the same Artaxerxes as found in the book of Ezra due to Ezra and Nehemiah's joint participation in Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 8:9; 12:26, 36). The dates add up as well. It took Zerubbabel approximately 21 years to build the temple (compare Ezra 1:1; 3:8; and 6:15), and Ezra spent one year correcting the erroneous marriages of the people (22 total years / i.e., from the first year of Cyrus to the sixth year of Darius) (compare Ezra 7:9 to Ezra 10:9, 17). Twelve years exist between the writing of Ezra and Nehemiah (compare Ezra 7:7-9; 10:9, 17 with Nehemiah 2:2). The date of Nehemiah is therefore 444 BC and encompasses a span of approximately twelve years (compare Neh. 2:2 with 13:6).

### **Consider the Kings of Persia**

## Local News:

**Welcome to all our visitors.** We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please come back at your every opportunity.

**Rita York** was admitted into United Regional Hospital (room 807) this past week due to another blood clot found in her lung. Please keep Rita in your prayers. She is expected to be released soon.

**Verlon Powell** continues to recover from her recent stroke. She is at Rolling Meadows care facility room 31 (her usual room).

Check out our **live chat line on Monday evenings at 8:00 PM!** <http://www.floralheightschurchofchrist.org/chat/>

Although the chat line is designed to preach to the lost members of the church are encouraged to log on and participate in Bible discussion too.

**Continue to pray for our shut-ins:**

**Stella Davidson**  
696-1030 (Home)

**Verlon Powell**  
Rolling Meadows Health Care Room 31

**Calvin York:**  
692-0489 (Home).

**Bessie Murphy**  
4600 Taft Blvd, Apt. 538

- **Cyrus** (559 – 530 BC) (1<sup>st</sup> year as king of Babylon was 536 BC)
- **Cambyses** (the Ahasuerus or Xerxes of Ezra 4:6-23) (530 – 522 BC)
- **Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis)** (521 BC)
- **Darius the Great** (521 -486 BC)
- **Artaxerxes / Ahasuerus / Xerxes** (485 - 465 BC)
- **Artaxerxes I Longimanus** (464 – 424 BC)

### Nehemiah the Man

Nehemiah had gained word that the wall around Jerusalem remained in ruins after 92 years of the captives returning to Jerusalem (cf. Neh. 1:3) (i.e., 22 years to build the wall and spiritually restore the people plus 70 years of complacency). We are introduced to Nehemiah's convictions when he responds to the news of the ruined walls with weeping, fasting, and prayer (Neh. 1:4-11). God had commanded that the walls be constructed (Ezra 6:14; 9:9), and after 92 years they remained in ruins. It is apparent from Ezra 5:3 that God's people had been slowly working upon the wall yet with little progress (Neh. 2:16). With the providential help of God (Neh. 2:8), Nehemiah completed the wall project in 52 days (cf. Neh. 6:15). It is during this fifty two day period that we find out about Nehemiah's true character. Though laughed at (Neh. 2:19), mocked (Neh. 4:1-3), threatened (Neh. 4:11), plotted against (Neh. 6:1ff), falsely accused (Neh. 6:5-8), and intimidated by the enemies of God (Neh. 6:9, 13, 19), Nehemiah remained determined to accomplish God's will of building the wall (Neh. 4:14). A sense of duty and obedience to God were a great part of Nehemiah's character (Neh. 2:5, 17-18; 4:6; 5:16; 6:3; 10:29). Nehemiah was a man of great faith (Neh. 2:20) and prayer (1:5-11; 2:4; 4:4, 9). He was confident in God's providential care (Neh. 2:2-4, 8, 18), bold to do right (Neh. 2:5ff; 4:14), filled with a hatred of sin (Neh. 4:4-5), and willing to expose sin whenever it rose its ugly head (Neh. 5:6-7). Nehemiah was deeply concerned about the spiritual (Neh. 1:3-4) and physical (Neh. 5:10, 14, 17) well-being of God's people. Through all that transpired in the twelve years that Nehemiah was in Jerusalem, it seems that the development of his own character comes to a climax at chapter 13. God's people were guilty of three counts of disobedience. Nehemiah corrected each of their errors and ended each case with the common denominator phrase, "*Remember me, O my God, concerning this... spare me according to the greatness of thy lovingkindness*" (Neh. 13:14, 22, 31). Nehemiah had understood greater than ever that duties belong to the individual and each will be responsible for their own actions. If each of us as Christians would gain greater understanding of this fact, then we may have a greater outlook on life and eternity. I cannot control what others do, but I can control what I do. Duties belong to me as an individual. When others are angry at me, laugh, mock, or even threaten me I must press forward and perform my God ordained duties. Nehemiah was this kind of a person! One may say that the book of Nehemiah is a handbook for elders and those aspiring to be elders. Others may say Nehemiah is a book that encourages Christians of all gender and race to perform their God given duties no matter the consequences. The message of the book is clear and simple. When God gives a command, let us do all within our power to achieve His will and thereby bring glory to His name.

# Nehemiah

## Introduction:

Nehemiah appears in history during the year 444 BC. The people of God had spent 70 years in Babylonian captivity as God had foretold through the prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 25:8-11 / 606 [1<sup>st</sup> year of Nebuchadnezzar] to 536 BC). God had promised that His people would return to Jerusalem after the prescribed seventy years in captivity (Jer. 29:10). The Lord's request was that His people rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem's walls (cf. Ezra 6:14; 9:9). Ninety two years would pass before Nehemiah comes on the scene and the walls had yet to be completed. The story of Nehemiah is a study on determination. We don't read of Nehemiah conquering multitudes of peoples. Nehemiah did not perform a grand miracle to amaze anyone. Nehemiah does not exhibit great intellectual knowledge to wow us. Nehemiah was simply a man that was a hard worker and tried to get others to work hard too (cf. Neh. 5:16; 6:3).

## I. An Examination of Dates and Time:

- A. **Cyrus** (559 – 530 BC) (comes into power in Babylon during 536 BC)
- B. **Cambyses** (the Ahasuerus or Xerxes of Ezra 4:6-23) (530 – 522 BC)
- C. **Gomates (Pseudo-Smerdis)** (521 BC)
- D. **Darius the Great** (521 -486 BC)
- E. **Artaxerxes / Ahasuerus / Xerxes** (485 - 465 BC)
- F. **Artaxerxes I Longimanus** (464 – 424 BC)

## II. The Christian faces Obstacles in life when trying to Live Godly:

- A. When the faithful try to maintain a state of righteousness there will be trouble (cf. Titus 3:8, 14; II Tim. 3:12).
- B. Those who care nothing for spiritual living will:
  - 1. Laugh at the Christian (Neh. 2:19).
  - 2. Mock (Neh. 4:1-3).
  - 3. Threaten (Neh. 4:11).
  - 4. Plot against (Neh. 6:1ff) and falsely accuse us (Neh. 6:5-8).
  - 5. Use tactics of intimidation (Neh. 6:9, 13, 19).

## III. The Christian's Response to said Obstacles:

- A. Give up (cf. Gal. 6:12)?
- B. Have the conviction (Neh. 2:20; 6:9) to take a stand (Neh. 4:10-12, 17; 5:6-7).
- C. Be of courage (Neh. 4:14; 6:11), pray (Neh. 4:4, 9), and determined to accomplish God's will (Neh. 4:6).

## Conclusion:

Resolve is often not enough to see us through our intentions to keep God's commands (cf. Neh. 10:29, 39 comp. to Neh. 13:11). Our resolve must be mingled with conviction, prayer, and determination. As we traverse through this life we shall see many people fall by the wayside in their faith. As discouraging as the world and even brethren can be at times we must realize that we have a duty of faith to perform unto the Lord. Let us develop the work ethic of Nehemiah and do all that God commands.