

His prominent position in the court of Artaxerxes (1:11) allowed him to have access to the knowledge of things in the territories as well as the official matters in the palace. He served two periods of governor of Jerusalem and succeeded in rebuilding the all and fortifying the city...for defensive, not offensive purposes. Although many modern scholars argue for an anonymous author for this book it is more consistent to see Nehemiah as the author particularly in the light of the statements that he makes about himself.. autobiographical notes of real interest(13:29-31, etc.).

An outline might look like this:

- I. Nehemiah's return 1:1-2:11
- II. Rebuilding the walls 2:12-7:4
- III. The rest of Nehemiah's first term 7:5-13:3
- IV. Nehemiah's second term 13:4-31

Note regarding the history of redemption parallel those given for Ezra on page 102.

Questions for the book of Nehemiah include these: What was the true chronological relationship between the ministries of Ezra and Nehemiah? Does the Nehemiah action give the grounds for the later antipathy between the Jews and Samaritans...ill will that continued into New Testament times? Does the action of chapter 8 constitute a period of canonizing for portions of the Old Testament Scriptures? How does the reaction of Nehemiah to the detractors of his time give us indication of how our own energies should be spent?

From archaeology we pick up a few interesting pieces to the Nehemiah work. The drachma (a Greek silver coin) mentioned in Nehemiah 7:71 was once thought to be an anachronistic "slip of the pen" proving a late date of the book, but the discovery of drachmas in the Persian level at Beth-Zur (just north of Hebron) demonstrates the inaccuracy of this theory. And one of the Elephantine papyri, dated to 407 BC, mentions the sons of Sanballat whom it calls the governor of Samaria (Neh. 2:10)

Keys to understanding Nehemiah include his intense desire for the people of Jerusalem (1:4) and his survey of the city (2:12-16). The affinity of Nehemiah for purity in everything from money lending (ch. 5) to the marriage situation is important...his zeal is not just for building but for the totality of spiritual reform. The renewal of the covenantal relationship in 9-10 is also of great interest.

Study tips: Read through the book at a single sitting! (You should know that by heart by now..) And study the background as with kings. Pay particular attention to the dialogues of Nehemiah and Sanballat, Tobiah, and the life. Note with care the autobiographical notes Nehemiah makes with regard to his own motivation, interest, etc. Study the matter of the mixed marriages, the resolution of same and the work of Nehemiah's revival.

Further reading is recommended in Kidner: EZRA and NEHEMIAH (IVP). NEHEMIAH AND THE DYNAMICS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, by Cyril Barber (Loizeaux) analyzes Nehemiah as a successful leader. This series of helpful studies also has a study guide for group or individual use. NEHEMIAH: A MAN OF PRAYER AND PERSISTENCE (Regal) by Gene Getz is a character study of Nehemiah for leaders. Those who enjoy audio studies will appreciate the tape series by Jack Murray (Bible Evangelism).