

Neh 1:1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Susa the citadel,

Neh 1:2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.

Neh 1:3 And they said to me, “The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”

Neh 1:4 As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Neh 1:5 And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

Neh 1:6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.

Neh 1:7 We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Neh 1:8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,

Neh 1:9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

Neh 1:10 They are your servants and your people, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.

Neh 1:11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Chronology of Nehemiah (Jehovah comforts)

CK Jen

Event	Month /Day	Year	Reference
Hanani brings Nehemiah a report from Jerusalem (20th year of Artaxerxes I)		445–444 B.C.	Chapter 1:1
Nehemiah before King Artaxerxes	1	445	Chapter 2:1
Nehemiah arrives to inspect Jerusalem walls		445	Chapter 2:11
Wall is finished	6/25	445	Chapter 6:15
People of Israel gather	7	445	Chapter 7:73–8:1
People of Israel celebrate Feast of Booths	7/15–22	445	Chapter 8:14
People of Israel fast and confess sins	7/24	445	Chapter 9:1
Nehemiah returns to Susa (32nd year of Artaxerxes I)		433	Chapter 5:14; 13:6

The book of Nehemiah was written after 433 BC

Kings of Persia

CK Jen

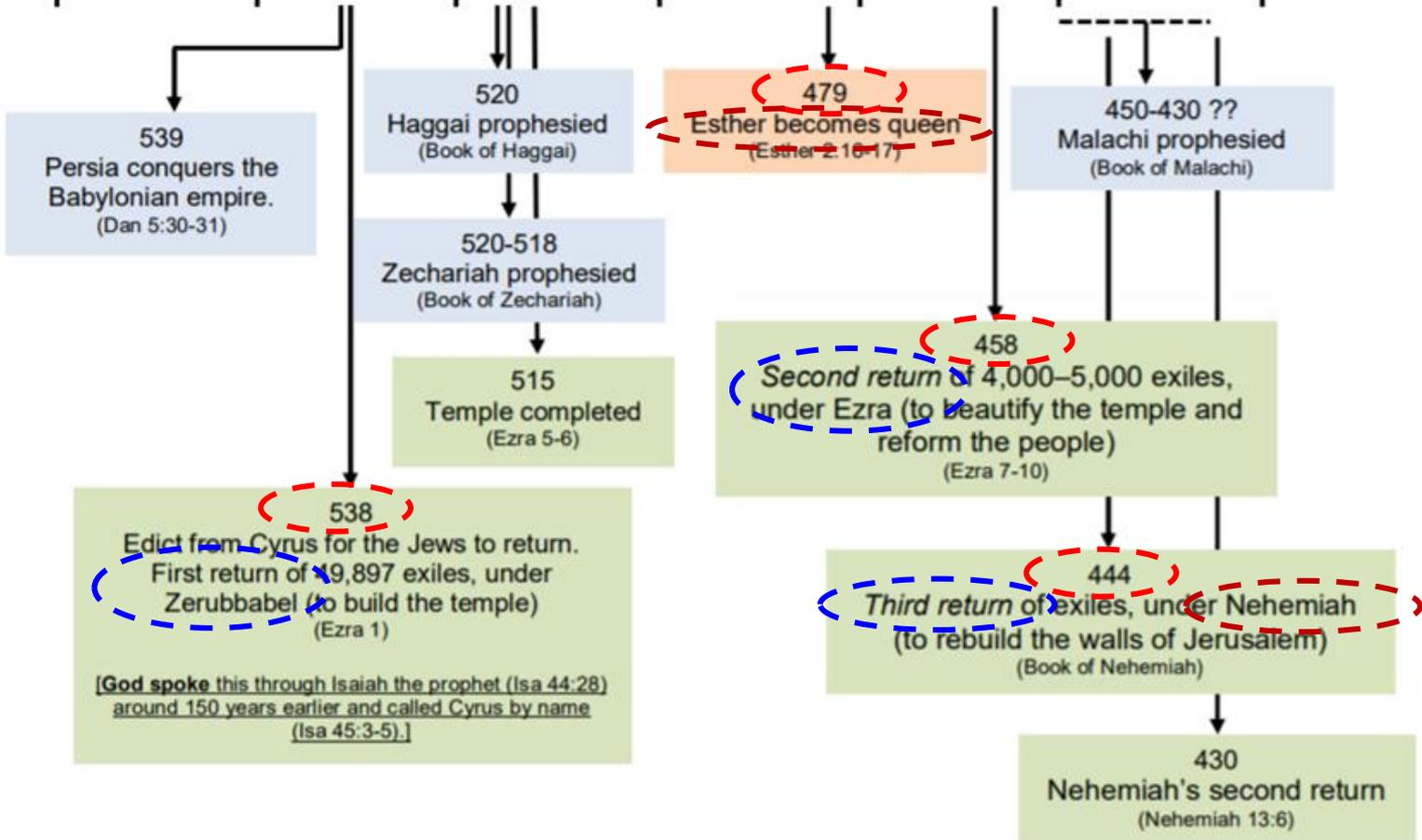
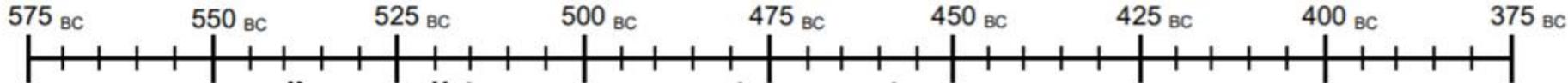
Cambyses
530 - 522

Cyrus
559 - 530

Darius I
521 - 486

Xerxes
485 - 465

Artaxerxes
464 - 424



Exact dates of prophecies varies according to source.

Israelis were captured.
From Jerusalem

Zerubbabel 1st return

608 BC

70年

538 BC

950 900 850 800 750 700 650 600 550 500 450 400

Egypt

Assyria

Babylon

Persia

N. & S. Kingdoms

Judah Alone

Exile

Post-Exile

△ Solomon dies

△ Israel falls

722 BC

△ Judah falls

586 BC

△ Captives return

538 BC

Major Prophets

Isaiah

Jeremiah/Lam.

Daniel

Ezekiel

Minor Prophets

Obadiah
Joel

Jonah
Micah
Amos
Hosea

Nahum
Zephaniah
Habakkuk

Haggai
Malachi
Zechariah

The history contained in the book of Ezra is about the Israelites returning from captivity, **rebuilding the temple of God, and beginning the restoration of God's chosen people according to God's economy**, for the restoration of His testimony on earth. The history contained in Nehemiah is about **rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, further restoring Israel's service and worship of God**, and continuing the restoration of His witness among God's chosen people to complete His economy.

Neh 1:1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hacaliah. Now it happened in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in **Susa the citadel**,

“Chislev” refers to a time in the reign of Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1), who ruled Persia from 464 – 423 BC. He succeeded Ahasuerus, the husband of Esther, also known as Xerxes. “Twentieth year” means 446 BC - 445 BC in the reign of Persian king Artaxerxes. “Susa, the citadel” was the winter resort of the Persian kings. In ~479 BC, Esther became Xerxes’ queen in this palace (Esther 2:8-18),

Esther 2:8 So when the king's order and his edict were proclaimed, and when many young women were gathered in **Susa the citadel** in custody of Hegai, Esther also was taken into the king's palace and put in custody of Hegai, who had charge of the women.

Neh 1:1 The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the fortress,

Neh 1:2 that **Hanani, one of my brethren**, came, he and **certain men of Judah**. And **I asked them** concerning the Jews that had escaped, who were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

Neh 1:3 And **they said to me**, Those who remain, that are left of the captivity there in the province, are in great affliction and reproach; and the wall of Jerusalem is in ruins, and its gates are burned with fire.

Neh 1:4 **As soon as I heard these words** I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Nehemiah had a team of brothers: spiritual companions. Hanani was known to Nehemiah, and some Bible commentators say that he may have been Nehemiah's brother. There were also certain men of Judah. It is not evident that Nehemiah knew these men. This may mean that Nehemiah had a companion in Hanani, whom he knew, but he ushered the other men of Judah into his service team. This also indicates that even though Nehemiah was alone in Shushan, Persia, in captivity, his heart and burden were with God's people and God's testimony. He did not let his isolation hinder his burden. When the men came from Judah, Nehemiah seized the opportunity to fellowship with them and pray.

Do we have a service team? Perhaps we are alone or we feel there is no one we can be with. Do we look for opportunities to find companions? Do we preach the gospel? If we have companions, do we have detailed fellowship with them, and also prayers? Nehemiah prayed as soon as he heard the words of the brothers from Judah. What about us? Do we mourn for the situation of the church, for the situation of brothers and sisters, for the lack of the preaching of the gospel, for the lack of pursuing, for the lack of prayers?

However, Nehemiah did not blame anyone. As we will see in a later slide, he took responsibility for the poor condition of the church, and confessed his own sins.

Neh 1:2 that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem.

Neh 1:3 And they said to me, **“The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.”**

Neh 1:4 **As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.**

The book of Nehemiah was written by Nehemiah after 433 BC. The kingdom of Judah was destroyed in 586 BC, so **Nehemiah was born in exile, and maybe even his parents.** But Neh 1:2-4 indicates that **he, as part of a new generation,** paid great attention to the condition of the people of Judah, Jerusalem and the walls and gates (the **testimony of the church**), something which also very much concerned God. Therefore, God often spoke to him and sent him back to Jerusalem. **In Montreal, the teaching and shepherding of the children by the parents in the Lord should be more critical and effective than the same services provided by the serving ones in the church.**

God's eternal plan is that we (represented by the people of Israel) be God's people, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. But we often disobey God, provoke Him to anger, endanger ourselves, and even fall into captivity (that is, we lose the knowledge, enjoyment, experience, witness and living out of the all-inclusive Lord). But God has an abundance of mercy, forgives our sins and transgressions, and is willing to bring us back to His eternal purpose countless times. The people of Israel, after serving the king of Babylon for 70 years, were allowed by God to return, according to His promise. However, there were many exiles and few who returned (even among the returning Israelis, there were not many pillars), so we need to be vigilant on our part.

Neh 1:4 **As soon as I heard these words** I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

Neh 1:5 And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

Neh 1:6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, **confessing the sins of the people of Israel**, which **we have sinned against you. Even I** and my father's house have sinned.

Neh 1:7 We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the **commandments**, the **statutes**, and the **rules** that you commanded your servant Moses.

Nehemiah confesses not only the sins of the people of Israel, but also his own sins and the sins of his father's house. In this prayer, he does not attempt to solve problems or make plans as to what to do, but he confesses.

When there is a shortage, do I confess my sins? Or do I blame other saints? This may be one of the biggest traps of serving ones. Nehemiah was a serving one (a servant). However, he did not stand on his status as a serving one, but rather realized that as a serving one, he was more accountable to God than the others. Therefore, he confessed. However, his confession was not general but specific. In verse 7, he enumerates the three things that he and the people had not kept: God's commandments (general principles of the law, eg. the ten commandments), God's statutes (which explain and expand on the commandments, eg. Exodus 20:22-26) and God's rules (ordinances, which are statutes but also include verdicts or judgments, eg. Exodus 21:1-33:19). Such a thorough confession indicates that Nehemiah was a thorough and detailed person. It also may indicate that thorough and detailed confession will usher in God's thorough forgiveness and cleansing, and empty us of all dependence on ourselves and what we may be able to do. Nehemiah's detailed prayer shows that he did not trust in his natural ability or capability.

Nehemiah also wrote down his prayer, since he is the author of the book. This means it is good to write down not just our testimonies or inspirations, but also our prayers, and even our prayers of confession. Such a detailed and written confession may help to solidify and confirm our repentance to the Lord, and also remind us at a later date of what we confessed.

Neh 1:5 And I said, “O LORD God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,

Neh 1:6 let your ear be attentive and your eyes open, to hear the prayer of your servant that I now pray before you day and night for the people of Israel your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which **we have sinned against you. Even I and my father's house have sinned.**

Neh 1:7 **We have acted very corruptly against you** and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.

Therefore, we who are parents and all who are part of the church, need to cherish the young ones, even the very young children very much, and not have the concept that they will be able to know the Lord and His will and serve Him after they have grown up. The sooner and the earlier they know the Lord, the more they will be greatly used by the Lord, and the more the church will be greatly blessed. In addition, we also need to pay attention to “today” which the Lord has given us to cause us to turn to Him and rely on Him and care about the condition of His church (the saints around us).

Neh 1:6 states that Nehemiah was a brother who prayed intimately to God day and night. He also knew that he was a slave of God and that the people of Israel (we) were also slaves of God. He was one with God and God's people, so even though he, and even his parents, were born in exile, he still believed that Israel's exile was due to the fact that he also had sinned (Neh 1:6), thus causing him to confess (Neh 1:6). 6,7). Therefore, in the church life, the life of Christ in the brothers and sisters may not grow healthily because of our poor service. We need to confess our sins sincerely instead of blaming the brothers and sisters, and help them to confess their sins, repent and turn to God. Nehemiah's living and person are a good example for us.

Neh 1:8 Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, **'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,**

Neh 1:9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from **there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'**

Neh 1:10 They are your servants and your people, whom **you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.**

When Nehemiah prayed to God, he stood on the word of God and prayed according to it. Therefore, God was bound by His own words. We need to learn to offer such kind of prayers. He did not complain about what had happened to the people, but reflected on the root of their being scattered and their suffering. If the people had not "acted very corruptly" against God, God would not have withdrawn His hand of blessing; therefore, if the people did not turn away from their evil deeds, God would not extend His hand of blessing.

Nehemiah dared to intercede for the captured Israelites because of God's own clear promises which he knew well. Although the people had sinned again and again, Nehemiah recognized that they were God's "servants" and His "people" whom God had "redeemed by [His] great power and by [His] strong hand." God's plan of salvation is to take the initiative to redeem sinners (like us) who are completely corrupt and unable to actively love Him; therefore, we clearly understand that "It is not that we love God, but that God loves us."

Although Nehemiah was the king's cup bearer, he was very familiar with God's words, and he quoted extensively from the books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus in his prayers. We need to diligently pursue the Lord's words individually and corporately, and read and listen carefully to the words of the servants of the Lord.

Neh 1:10 They are **your servants** and **your people**, whom you have redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand.

Neh 1:11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of **your servant**, and to the prayer of **your servants** who delight to fear your name, and give success to **your servant** today, and grant him mercy in the sight of **this man**.” Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Exo 19:5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine;

Exo 19:6 and you shall be to me a **kingdom of priests** and a holy nation.’

1. Nehemiah realized that God’s people were not just His people but also His servants to serve Him, perhaps based on Exodus 19:6. Nehemiah had a high view of God’s people. He considered God’s people as pillars. He realized that God had not just redeemed them (1:10) to save them, but to be His servants or pillars.
2. Nehemiah prayed individually, but he also prayed corporately. He acknowledged that his prayer was not the only prayer, but there was also the prayer of God’s servants (1:11).
3. As Nehemiah prayed, the Lord spoke to him and gave him a leading to talk to the king of Persia. In 1:11, Nehemiah prayed that God would give him mercy “in the sight of this man,” referring to Artaxerxes, king of Persia. This means that as he prayed, he was sensitive to God’s speaking to him, and he uttered or echoed back to God what God was speaking to him.

Are we alert to respond to God when He speaks to us? Sometimes, when we pray, we may be satisfied that we have prayed and fulfilled our duty. However, do we look for the Lord’s speaking, and then, once we feel we have the Lord’s speaking, are we bold to utter that back to God? We may not be absolutely clear, but in responding to God, the Lord may eventually lead us in that way, or in a different way. It is not a matter of a “right or wrong” leading, but our interaction with the Lord, individually and with brothers and sisters.

Neh 1:11 O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant, and to the prayer of your servants who delight to fear your name, and give success to your servant today, and **grant him mercy in the sight of this man.**" Now **I was cupbearer to the king.**

Neh 2:1 In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence.

Neh 2:2 And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid.

Neh 2:3 I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"

Nehemiah 1:11 states that Nehemiah was a brother who prayed and feared God. He also knew that there were other Israelites like him who loved and feared God). He was also a man who feared authority (Neh 2:2) (He was a cupbearer to the king (Romans 13:1, 2). Because of the presence and guidance of God, he frankly expressed his inner concern for the city and gates of Jerusalem (Neh 2:3). **When we are studying, working, at home, or engaged in any walk of life, we must not forget our intimate and close fellowship with God, and we must pay attention to God's will (the saints of the church) and the burdens which He has imparted to us.**

Loving and fearing God's name is the unique living of a servant of God. People who truly know God are both those who fear God and those who "delight in God." We fear God because we love God, and we love Him because we fear God

Rom 13:1 Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

Rom 13:2 Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

Neh 1:8 **Remember the word** that **you commanded** your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,

Neh 1:9 but if you return to me and keep my commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

Not only did Nehemiah confess his sins and the sins of his people, but he also based his prayer on the word of God (in the Old Testament). This means that he knew the Old Testament and God's words. He was bold to remind God (v.8) of His word concerning unfaithfulness, and also of His word concerning returning to Him. This means that Nehemiah was not just a man of action, as may be seen in this book, but he knew and pursued the word of God. God was therefore able to speak to him.

The more we come to God and to His word, the more He may speak to us. The more we come to His word, the more we will know Him, and the more sensitive we may be to His speaking. The more we come to His word, the more our prayers and our repentance and confession will be specific.

Without the word of God, our knowledge of God and of ourselves may be vague and general. We may merely ask God to bless our family, our job, our studies and our health. Even our knowledge of ourselves may be limited. We may not even feel the need to confess our sins. Or we may become discouraged because we feel that we can never measure up to God's standard. That is why many saints leave the church life.

Do we come to the word of God, and even remind God of His word? Nehemiah had an intimate relationship with God and could speak to God in such a way. Do we?