

**Week 46**  
**Ezra 7-10, Nehemiah, Malachi**

**Key Verse: “They will be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”**  
**Malachi 3:17, NASB**

**The Return and Restoration - continued**

The events of Ezra 6 concluded around 516 BC. We have already learned that the events of Esther occurred many years after that from about 483-473 BC. How awesome is the Lord God Almighty that he would use one obedient woman to intervene and set in motion a plan that saved the Jewish people. The Book of Esther is full of godly principles to follow and ungodly characters to avoid, but for this study we will only make note of a few of the historic facts of that time in order to more fully appreciate the events that took place 15 years later:

- God is not specifically mentioned in the pages of Esther, but we see Him at work in the events and lives of the people involved.
- Xerxes (Ahasuerus) was king over the Persian Empire from 486 to 465 BC (he was the son of Darius I the Great who supported the restoration of the Jerusalem Temple and made the decree that its reconstruction be carried out with diligence).
- Esther was an orphan, raised by her cousin Mordecai; he was an exile from Jerusalem and of the tribe of Benjamin.
- They lived in the citadel of Susa, in present-day southwestern Iran about 150 miles north of the Persian Gulf, about 1,000 miles from Jerusalem.
- Mordecai sat at the king’s gate so probably had a position in the king’s service.
- Esther was captured as a candidate for King Xerxes new queen – taken for her outer beauty, but most likely selected as queen because she had both inner and outer beauty; this position was God’s call on her life.
- She followed the advice of her cousin/guardian and kept her Jewish heritage a secret from everyone.
- She became queen in 479 BC.
- During the first years of her reign, Haman, a man whose hate toward the Jews grew like a wildfire, was promoted by the king to a seat of honor higher than all other nobles.
- At the recommendation of Haman, the king ordered that on a certain day all Jews were to be annihilated—in all the providences, including all the way to Jerusalem—and this decree was irrevocable.
- At risk of her life, Queen Esther approached the king and requested his presence at a banquet, but did not bring up that at that time that the decree to kill the Jews included her.
- That night, the night before Esther was going to ask the king to save her life, the king had a sleepless night and was reminded by his reading of the time Mordecai saved his life.
- The next day, Haman, the enemy of the Jews, had to honor Mordecai; Queen Esther won the right to allow the Jews to defend themselves; and the king killed Haman who had talked him into this evil decree.
- The Jews were successful in their defense and the new Jewish holiday of Purim was established to celebrate their victory; Purim is still celebrated today among the Jews.

Many more years pass before we get the next Biblical record of this historic period of the return and rebuilding of Jerusalem. It was 458 BC, 80 years after the first group under Zerubbabel

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returned to Israel, before the next occurrence of the next major voyage from Persia to Judah. No doubt, there was some going back and forth during that time and probably some relocating to the homeland, but 80 years pass by before another mass exodus to the Promised Land. At the time of that expedition, the Jews had observed the annual celebration of Purim 15 times and the Temple in Jerusalem had been completed and operational for 58 years.

**Day 1 – Ezra 7:1-28; 9:1-15, 10:1-17, Confronted by God’s Teacher**

1. In Ezra 7, we finally meet the man Ezra. The year is 458 BC. Read Ezra 7:1-12 and 27-28. What do we know about Ezra?

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2. Can some of these same descriptions of Ezra be used to describe you? Why or why not?

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3. Read Ezra 7:12-26. What mission did King Artaxerxes give to Ezra?

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4. Read Ezra 9:1-15. In the many years after the completion of the Temple, but before the arrival of Ezra, what had the people in Judah begun to do? What was Ezra’s response?

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5. Read Ezra 10:1-17. How did the people respond to Ezra’s grief and their sin?

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**Prayer focus:**

**Psalm 119:11 tells us what we can do to help us avoid sin:** “Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”

**1 John 1:9 tells us how to get rid of the sin in our lives:** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

**Luke 15:10 tells us what happens in heaven when sinners repent:** “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

**Psalm 51 is a prayer of confession/repentance. Please consider making it your personal prayer today for whatever sin God has brought to your mind.**

**Day 2, Nehemiah 1:1-2:20, Praying then Rebuilding**

If you read Psalm 51 in your prayer yesterday, verse 18 may stand out in your mind as we begin today’s lesson—“By Your favor do good to Zion; build the walls of Jerusalem. The Temple was completed in 516 BC; wall reconstruction does not begin until 445 BC – 71 years later! It has been 13 years since Ezra arrived in Jerusalem and began his work of teaching God’s statutes and ordinances to Israel. God’s people have confessed and turned from their sin of intermarrying those who worshipped other gods. Now, it’s time to rebuild the physical walls around the city to provide protection from enemies and signify their separation from those who do not worship the Lord their God. Enter Nehemiah, God’s man for the job.

6. Read Nehemiah 1:1-4. Where is Nehemiah? What news is he given? What is his response?

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7. Nehemiah 1:5-11 records Nehemiah’s prayer for Jerusalem, consider praying that same prayer for America as you read through it. What does the prayer tell us is needed to rebuild what’s broken in our families and our nation?

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8. Read Nehemiah 2:1-10. What was the result of Nehemiah’s prayers?

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9. What indication do we have that Nehemiah’s mission will not be easy?

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10. Verses 2:4 and 8 tell us a few key reasons Nehemiah was successful in his mission. What were the keys to his success?

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11. Read Nehemiah 2:11-20. What did Nehemiah do to motivate the people to begin the work?

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**Prayer focus: Nehemiah prayed before he acted. Write down a few of the tasks you have to accomplish this week; spend some time in prayer asking for God’s wisdom, strength, and understanding for each one of them; revise and make notes on your list of anything the Holy Spirit may have revealed to you during your time of prayer.**

**Day 3, Nehemiah 3:1-4:23 and Ephesians 6:10-18, Working Together**

The destroyed wall around Jerusalem was a shameful reminder that God had allowed the city to be destroyed because His people had destroyed their relationship with Him. Rebuilding the wall would stand as a reminder that God forgives and restores. It would also give the Jews political power, security, and self-determination; therefore, the rebuilding of the walls was met with great opposition by the political leaders.

12. Scan through Nehemiah 3, focusing on verses 1 and 28-30. Hopefully you noticed the phrase “next to them/him” was repeated often in the chapter. What do you notice about how the work was accomplished?

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13. What differences do you think we would see in Harrison, in Arkansas, in the United States, and in the world if each of God’s people “rebuilt the wall across from where he lived”? In other words, what changes would occur if each of God’s people did the work God called them to do?

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14. The heading on Nehemiah 4 reveals to us that the enemy knows he’s in trouble when people work in unity. It also reveals that our enemies will not stand idly by while we do God’s work. According to Nehemiah 4:1-3, what was the response of the enemy to the rebuilding of Jerusalem’s wall?

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15. Read Nehemiah 4:4-5. What is the best, first response to opposition?

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16. Read Nehemiah 4:15-23. What was required of the workers in order to stand up against the opposition and complete the work?

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17. When we’re doing God’s work, we should expect opposition. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. What weapons and protection should Christians always have in place as we do the work God calls us to do?

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When we’re doing God’s work, we should expect opposition. It wasn’t easy, but you may be delighted to know that the wall was completed in 52 days—less than two months! A wall that was in ashes and ruins and rubble, was strong and in place around the city of Jerusalem (without the aid of modern equipment) in 52 days even though half the people were busy protecting the workers. We serve the Lord God Almighty!

**Prayer focus:** Revelations 15:3 says, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!” This would be a good day to thank and praise God for the difficult tasks and situations He has brought you through. Remember them, rename them to Him, and give Him the praise. Consider giving God the glory by sharing with a friend your favorite memory of God’s work in your life.

**Day 4, Nehemiah 7:1-3, Nehemiah 13, Isaiah 49:16, Luke 10:20, 1 Timothy 4:7-16,**  
**Maintaining the Wall**

18. Read Nehemiah 7:1-3. What organizational structure does Nehemiah put in place after the wall is completed?

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19. Like the completion of the wall around Jerusalem, we can’t just finish a project and be done—the work must be maintained and supported. What are some activities Christians should do regularly to maintain our “wall”?

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20. Nehemiah chapters 4, 7, 10, 11, and 12 give us a long list of names of people involved in the return from exile and the various building projects. Read Isaiah 49:16 and Luke 10:20. Where are the names of believers recorded?

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I hope you’re thrilled to know that Jesus knows your name and has it recorded!

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21. Read Nehemiah 13. What are some of the things Nehemiah discovers and what does he do about them?

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22. Like Nehemiah watched over his assigned area of responsibility, we must carefully and constantly watch over our lives and areas of responsibility. Read 1 Timothy 4:7-16. What are some areas of responsibility where Christians are urged to be diligent?

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**Prayer focus: Pray for the area of diligence listed above that needs the most work in your life. Ask God, what should I do? What should I not do? How can I protect myself in this area in the future? Commit to follow the instructions He gives you.**

**Day 5, Book of Malachi, Final Words**

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament and provides the last prophetic words until God breaks silence again in the New Testament to announce the coming of John the Baptist. Final words are important. We should study them thoroughly, but we only have today to get through it so, for now, let's try to get the main points.

23. Read Malachi 1:1-2. What is God saying to His people? How do we know today that God still loves His people?

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24. Read Malachi 1:6-9. What are God's people giving to Him? How are we guilty of this today?

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25. Read Malachi 2:10:16. How are God’s people being unfaithful? How are we guilty of this today?

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26. Read Malachi 2:17-3:5. What does this message have to say to us today?

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27. Read Malachi 3:6-12. What are God’s people doing and what does God require them to do?

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28. What blessings will the people receive if they obey?

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29. Read Malachi 3:13-4:5. What is coming to the disobedient people? Who is spared the judgment?

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30. And now, the final recorded words of the Old Testament—the final prophetic words before a 400-year period of no new prophetic messages from God. Read Malachi 4:4-6. What are the people to do? Who is God sending and who do we know him to be (see John 11:7-14).

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God gave some powerful messages through the prophet Malachi, and even gave them information about the next prophet. Before closing this portion of Scripture—this time from creation to 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ—God summarized what He most wanted them to know and do:

- I love you
- Obey Me
- Obedience brings My blessings
- Disobedience brings My judgment
- You will hear more from Me later

**Prayer focus:** Spend some time giving thanks for the overwhelming expression of His love for us (See **Philippians 2:5-11**), and express your commitment to have the attitude of Christ.