

Rebuilding Jerusalem and Its People's Purity

A study in the book of Nehemiah

Andrew Swango

Book of Nehemiah - Introduction

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AUTHOR

The whole book is written in first person, so Nehemiah himself is the author. We see throughout the whole book times when Nehemiah speaks to God--both in prayers and in writing it down. It is abundantly clear that Nehemiah was a man of prayer. Nehemiah rebuilt more than just walls!

DATE

Exact dates are below in the commentary. Nehemiah 1-12 takes place between 445 and 443 BC, about a year and a little more. Nehemiah 13 is harder to date: It is 431 at the earliest because he went back to Persia after being governor 12 and 13 years. It is 424 at the latest because that was the last year of King Artaxerxes. This leaves a gap of 12-20 years.

AUDIENCE

The audience is anyone. This is a book of history, so it is meant to last for anyone to read.

STYLE

The style is historical.

THIS CLASS

Style

The style of this class will focus on three things: the historical details of Jerusalem's wall, Nehemiah being a man of prayer, and Nehemiah's commitment to the Jews' purity.

Theme: Power

The theme of this class will be the Rebuilding of Jerusalem and Its People's Purity.

Nehemiah 2:5, Nehemiah "answered the king, 'Send me to Judah and to the city where my ancestors are buried, so that I may rebuild it.' "

Other Scriptures that show Nehemiah's purpose: Neh 1:2-3, 5:19, 8:8, 9:1-3, 13:14, 13:22b, 13:29.

Book of Nehemiah - Outline

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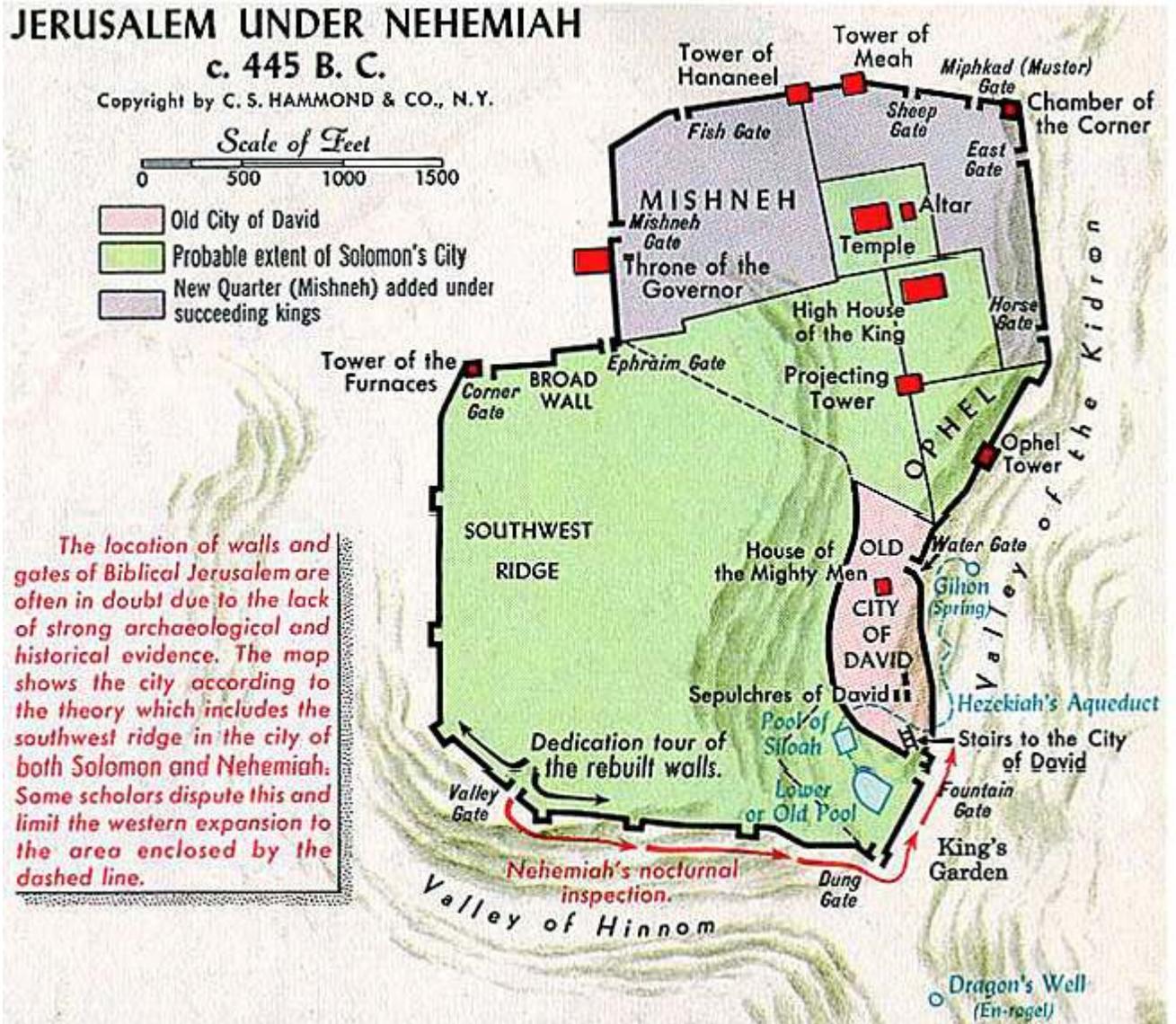
- 1:1-11** Nehemiah and the condition of Jerusalem.
 - 1:1-4 Nehemiah hears about Jerusalem's condition.
 - 1:5-11 Nehemiah's prayer over the Israelite people.
- 2:1-10** **Artaxerxes I sends Nehemiah to Jerusalem.**
 - 2:1-8 Nehemiah's request of Artaxerxes.
 - 2:9-10 Nehemiah travels to Jerusalem.
- 2:11-20** **Nehemiah plans to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.**
 - 2:11-16 Nehemiah inspects the ruined walls.
 - 2:17-20 Nehemiah and the leaders start rebuilding the walls.
- 3:1-32** **Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, gate to gate.**
- 4:1-23** **Opponents oppose the builders; Half the wall is completed.**
 - 4:1-5 Opponents threaten the builders.
 - 4:6 Half the wall is completed.
 - 4:7-10 Opponents dishearten the builders.
 - 4:11-14 Opponents attack the builders.
 - 4:15-23 The builders' readiness for battle.
- 5:1-13** **Injustice in charging interest.**
 - 5:1-6 Injustice among the people.
 - 5:7-13 Nehemiah enforces the no-interest law.
- 5:14-19** **Nehemiah's abdications for the people.**
- 6:1-14** **Opponents oppose Nehemiah.**
 - 6:1-4 Opponents attempt to harm Nehemiah.
 - 6:5-9 Opponents accuse Nehemiah of rebellion.
 - 6:10-14 Opponents hire others to oppose Nehemiah.
- 6:15-7:3** **Rebuilding of the walls completed.**
 - 6:15-16 Rebuilding of the walls completed
 - 6:17-19 Tobiah continues to oppose Nehemiah.
 - 7:1-3 Instructions for the new walls.
- 7:4-73a** **Nehemiah and the records from Zerubbabel's return.**
 - 7:4-5 Nehemiah finds the records of Zerubbabel's return to Jerusalem.
 - 7:6-73a Nehemiah's copy of Zerubbabel's records (Ezra 2)
- 7:73b-8:18** **Reading of the Law and celebrations.**
 - 7:73b-8:8 Ezra reads from the Law of Moses.
 - 8:9-12 The people celebrate the Festival of Trumpets after the reading.
 - 8:13-18 The people observe the Festival of Booths.
- 9:1-9:37** **Confessions and prayers**
 - 9:1-3 The people's confessions after the readings.
 - 9:4-6 Prayer of praise.
 - 9:7-15 Prayer over Israel's ancient history.
 - 9:16-21 Prayer over Israel's disobedience and God's faithfulness.
 - 9:22-25 Prayer over Israel's more recent history.
 - 9:26-31 Prayer over Israel's continual disobedience and God's discipline.
 - 9:32-35 Prayer confessing that Israel has been wicked and God has been righteous.
 - 9:36-37 Prayer about Israel's current state.
- 9:38-10:39** **Written vow.**
 - 9:38 Invitation to the vow.
 - 10:1-27 Names of those who signed the vow.
 - 10:28-29 Invitation for everyone to join in the vow.
 - 10:30-39 Copy of the vow.
- 11:1-12:26** **Records of those who settled in Jerusalem**
 - 11:1-24 Leaders of the people who lived inside Jerusalem.
 - 11:25-36 Leaders of the people who lived outside Jerusalem.
 - 12:1-26 Leaders of the Jews from Zerubbabel to current day.
- 12:27** **Dedication of the wall.**
 - 12:27-43 The festivities of the Levites and the leaders.
 - 12:44-47 Contributions to the Levites.
- 13:1-31** **Nehemiah returns to correct serious sins.**
 - 13:1-9 Eliashib and the people (priests?) intermixed with foreigners.
 - 13:10-14 Levites not being supported by the people.
 - 13:15-22 Working on the Sabbath.
 - 13:23-29 Marrying pagan wives.
 - 13:30-31 More instructions for the Levite contribution.

Book of Nehemiah - Suggested XXXXX-Week Schedule

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| <u>Week</u> | <u>Scriptures</u> |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Introduction/Theme, 1:1-2:20 |
| 2 | 3:1-4:43 |
| 3 | 5:1-19 |
| 4 | 6:1-19 |
| 5 | 7:1-8:18 |
| 6 | 9:1-10:39 |
| 7 | 11:1-12:47 |
| 8 | 13:1- |

Book of Nehemiah - Map of Jerusalem's Wall



The theme is how Nehemiah was a man of prayer, how he rebuilt Jerusalem, and the people's purity (Nehemiah 2:5). Nehemiah "answered the king, 'Send me to Judah and to the city where my ancestors are buried, so that I may rebuild it.' "

The translation I mostly use is the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

1:1-4 Nehemiah hears about Jerusalem's condition.

[Esther]. Chronologically, Esther 3-10 took place just 8 years before. For more information, see my chronology of the Jews under Persia.

Chisleu in the twentieth year. As we see from the next chapter, the king is Artaxerxes. This happened in his 20th year in the Hebrew month of Chisleu. This corresponds to November or December, 445 BC.

Fortress city of Susa. We learn from the last verse in this chapter that Nehemiah has a high position in the Persian Empire. How Nehemiah got to this point, we do not know. Perhaps it had something to do with the queen (see notes at 2:6).

Hanani. We learn from Neh 7:2 that Hanani is a great man of God. After Jerusalem's wall is completed, Nehemiah puts Hanani in charge of Jerusalem.

Wall broken down, gates burned down. We know from the book of Ezra that the temple was rebuilt during the days of Zerubbabel and Darius I. Why were the walls and gates never completed? Sometime about 10 years before, the previous inhabitants of Judah used Artaxerxes to stop the building (Ezra 4:6-23). For more information, see my chronology of the Jews under Persia.

Sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, prayed. We see in this chapter that Nehemiah shows his great love for Jerusalem and its people with strong emotions. And not only with his emotions, but he outwardly showed his sadness through prayer and fasting. He certainly has a heart for Jerusalem and God's people.

1:5-11 Nehemiah's prayer over the Israelite people.

For the children of Israel. (1) Most of the book of Nehemiah is about Jerusalem. But nowhere in this prayer does Nehemiah make mention of Jerusalem, its walls, or its gates. Nehemiah's reason for doing this may be his own, but the way this prayer is presented in his book shows how infinitely more important are people and their purity than a city and its walls! (2) Nehemiah's prayer has similar aspects as Daniel's prayer in Dan 9.

Moses said. Nehemiah is not quoting Moses, but is summarizing Moses' teaching from Deut 30:1-5. In fact, Nehemiah's prayer makes many, many references to things Moses taught in Deuteronomy. It is apparent that Nehemiah was very familiar with it.

This man. Scholars say that Nehemiah is talking about King Artaxerxes. Perhaps Nehemiah wants God to influence the king in some way. However, the next chapter does not imply that this was the case. Instead, Nehemiah is probably afraid of the king. He does not want his emotions to get in the way of his duties as the king's cupbearer. Nehemiah asks God to be merciful to him while he is in the presence of the king in case something goes bad because of Nehemiah's sadness.

I was the king's cupbearer. This is Nehemiah's explanation why he needed to be careful when in the presence of the king. He saw the king's face very often.

2:1-8 Nehemiah's request of Artaxerxes.

Nisan in the twentieth year. This corresponds to March or April, 444 BC. 8 months had passed since Nehemiah first heard about Jerusalem. Chapters 1-12 span a little over a year. Between verses 1 and 2, 8 months pass. Most likely, Nehemiah has been sad during this whole time. Perhaps it took 8 months for the king to finally ask Nehemiah what is wrong. I believe the king has noticed Nehemiah's sadness over these months and that it was not a fleeting emotion but a sadness that went to Nehemiah's core. No wonder the king asks what he does! (About whether Nehemiah is sick or the king saying this is depression, see below).

Never been sad in his presence. It seems odd that 8 months has passed and this is the first time Nehemiah is sad in the king's presence. This is best explained with the Greek version which says, "no one else was around." Nehemiah has been utterly sad for 8 months. The king took this opportunity when he and Nehemiah were alone to ask him why he is so sad. It is likely that it was improper for the king to show this kind of concern for his cupbearer in public. We see from verse 6 that the queen is there with them.

When you aren't sick. The Greek version says, "Why do you not control yourself?" In either the Greek or the Hebrew the message is the same. The king is basically saying, "You've been sad for too long. There is no reason for this. Your heart has been corrupted."

Depression. Literally (both in the Hebrew and Greek), this is best translated "corruption of the heart."
Overwhelmed with fear. Why is Nehemiah so fearful of the king asking about his sadness? Does the king not normally speak to his cupbearer so that Nehemiah did not expect this? Instead, I think Nehemiah is scared because of his sadness. Now that the king noticed his intense sadness, Nehemiah is scared about what the king will do because of his emotions. It was probably not proper to serve the king his wine with a demeanor of sadness.

What is your request. What a good response of the king! Instead of being angry against Nehemiah's sadness, the king wants to help Nehemiah's sadness over the destruction of his city. Of course, the city is the king's city also, being the capital of the Persian province of Judah where Ezra is still governor. The king wants to make things right for Nehemiah, so he offers his kingly power to fulfill whatever Nehemiah requests that will make him happy again.

Prayed to the God of heaven. This is Nehemiah's second prayer in this book. The king's hand is open to Nehemiah. He can ask the king for whatever he wants. Instead of blurting out his heart's desire, as most people would do, Nehemiah stops to pray first. Nehemiah wants God to guide him in this request. Nehemiah wants his quest to bring glory to God. He also wants his words to be proper in the king's sight. He wants God to have the king grant his request.

I may rebuild it. Nehemiah wants to be the one to go and do this. Instead of having the king delegate this task to someone else, Nehemiah wants to lead it himself. We see that Nehemiah not only wants to do a good thing for God's city, but his heart is in it also. His intense concern for Jerusalem and his intense sadness over its current condition will not let him see this done without actually seeing it done. This is his calling from God.

With the queen. (1) The Greek version does not say queen but concubine. Would a concubine be able to sit next to the king on his throne? I doubt it. Now, his queen would have began as his concubine (as Esther's situation was). So to me, it seems most likely that she is both the king's queen and wife and concubine. (2) Chronologically, who was Artaxerxes' queen at this time? Esther! The events of Esther happened about 8 years before. (For more information, see my chronology of the Jews under Persia and my commentary on Esther.) At first, I wonder: if this was Esther, why not say so? On the flip side, if this was not Esther, then why mention the queen at all? Either the queen is mentioned because she is Esther, or the queen is mentioned because the queen had a hand in this agreement between the king and Nehemiah, or both.

A definite time. Because of Neh 5:14 and 13:6, we know that Nehemiah spent 12 years in Judah as governor and rebuilding Jerusalem's walls.

Letters written to the governors. Does Nehemiah know about what happened in Ezra 4 when the rebuilding of Jerusalem had stopped about 10 years before? If so, he would use these letters to silence the surrounding governors so that he could finish rebuilding the walls. Even if he does not know about the events from Ezra 4, he probably knew about all the opposition the Jews have had in Jerusalem, from when they started building the temple 65 years before and continued until his day. So in any case, these letters would prove that he has the authority of the king to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.

Asaph. This is interesting because it is a Hebrew name. We can infer that there was another high-ranking Jew who was the guardian of the king's forest. Thus we see through both the Babylonian and Persian Empires, God placed Jews in high ranking positions (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Esther, Mordecai, etc.)

Graciously strengthened by my God. (1) Nehemiah hasn't gotten rid of his sadness yet. There was still so much to be done in Jerusalem. Yet God has given him a great gift through the king which gives Nehemiah hope, courage, and the authority to do this work. Yes, Nehemiah is strengthened! (2) When this happened with Ezra, he was strengthened also (Ezra 7:28).

2:9-10 Nehemiah travels to Jerusalem.

Governors. (1) Before Nehemiah even travels to Jerusalem, he visits the surrounding governors, showing them that he has the authority of the king to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. (2) Ezra did the same thing (Ezra 7:11-28, 8:36).

Infantry and cavalry. Contrast this with Ezra who did not ask Artaxerxes for infantry and cavalry (Ezra 8:22).

Here, it doesn't say that Nehemiah asked for military protection, but the king gave it for whatever the reason.

Sanballat the Horonite. A Horonite was probably a person from Horonaim (mentioned in Is 15:5), a city in Moab. An ancient set of Jewish manuscripts which date to about 400 BC, called the Elephantine Papyri, name Sanballat as the governor of Samaria. Sanballat becomes the primary opponents of the Jews during Nehemiah's day.

Tobiah the Ammonite. (1) I am not sure under what governance Tobiah was an official. It seems that he was born in Ammon and became an official under Saballat in Samaria (Neh 4:1-3). (2) We learn from other passages in Nehemiah that Tobiah has infiltrated the Israelites through marriage. Looking at this chronologically, when Zerubbabel arrived in Jerusalem 76 years before during the reign of Darius I, Arah

was one of the men who came with him. One some point, Arah fathered a son named Shecaniah. Shecaniah has a daughter and gives her in marriage to Tobiah the Ammonite, this official in Samaria. Tobiah and this Israelite daughter have a son named Jehohanan. Around the same time, Meshullam, son of Berechiah, has a daughter. Jehohanan (who is half-Israelite) marries the Israelite daughter of Meshullam. Probably not long after all that, Ezra arrives in Judah and deals with the issue of foreign wives in Judah (Ezra 9-10). It appears that the marriages between Tobiah and an Israelite woman and Jehohanan and an Israelite woman were not affected, probably because they lived in Samaria. In short, Tobiah is married into the Jews and his son, Jehohanan, is also married into the Jews. (Because of Neh 13:4, we see that this intermarriage will later involve Eliashib the high priest. Therefore, we can assume that the daughters of Shecaniah and Meshullam (who married into Tobiah's family) were Levites.) The connecting Scripture for all of this is Neh 6:18. That is when the Jerusalem wall is completed. We see that this intermarriage will continue to cause opposition between the Jews and their enemies in Samaria. Even though Sanballat was the primary enemy of the Jews during the days of Nehemiah, we see that Tobiah was an exceptionally painful thorn in their side.

2:11-16 Nehemiah inspects the ruined walls.

Three days. Ezra also took three days to relax and/or recover from his journey from Susa to Jerusalem (Ezra 8:32).

I didn't tell anyone. Instead of immediately trying to inspire the people to rebuild the walls, Nehemiah first wants to see the walls for himself. Maybe he wants to see if the report he heard was true. Maybe he wants the ruins to inspire himself to action. Maybe he wants to inspect how bad the walls are so he knows what will be involved in their repairs.

Valley Gate, King's Pool. Refer to the Map of Jerusalem's Wall for help on where all these places are.

Serpent's Well. This is also called the Dragon's Well. In the Greek, it says Nehemiah went toward the mouth of the well of fig trees. Today, fig trees were common on the east side of Jerusalem, also called the Mount of Olives.

Inspected the walls. The Greek says that Nehemiah mourned over the walls--also in verse 15.

King's Pool. (1) It is believed that this is the same as the Pool of Shiloah/Siloam. This pool was made by Hezekiah when he built the aquaduct that brought water from the Gihon Spring into the city (2Kings 2:20, 2Chr 32:30). (2) About 475 years later, Jesus would tell the man born blind to go and wash his eyes in the Pool of Siloam (John 9:6-11). (3) Jesus mentioned how the Tower of Siloam fell and killed 18 people. Nothing is known about this tower.

Heading back. The Greek does not mention that Nehemiah headed back. But if one looks at a map of the Jerusalem, for Nehemiah to return to the Valley Gate (where his inspections began), he would had to have turned back.

2:17-20 Nehemiah and the leaders start rebuilding the walls.

Gracious hand of God. I'm sure Nehemiah told them all about how he heard the news about Jerusalem, was sad in the king's presence, and how the king gave him all he needed to do this good work. But I also see how God is working here. The Jews were in captivity all through the Babylonian Empire. With Cyrus the Great, God allowed the Jews to be released from exile. Then during the reign of Darius I, God allowed Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Then during the reign of Artaxerxes I, God has allowed Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. And of course, Ezra and Esther are in there also. So over the last 100 years, we have seen God restore the remnant of the Jews in stages. (God had done the same thing with the Babylonians, as they attacked and took captive the Jews in stages.) Now, with the Jews under the Persian Empire, this was such a rich time of restoration for the Jews!

Let's start rebuilding. (1) The response of the leaders of Judah is similar to the response the people had when Haggai prophesied and inspired the people to start building the temple (Hag 1:14). Of course, the difference here is that there is no prophet mentioned during the time of Nehemiah. (2) Based on the date Nehemiah gives for the completion of the wall in Neh 6:15, the date they began working on the wall was July 26, 444 BC.

Geshem the Arab. Nothing is known about this person. He was probably a governor of another Persian province, probably one east or southeast of the Dead Sea, closer to the Arabian Peninsula, modern-day Jordan. It does not appear that Geshem was an official in Samaria with Sanballat and Tobiah because he is separated from them in Neh 6:6.

Rebelling against the king. Why would Sanballat say that Nehemiah is rebelling against the king when Nehemiah had just visited the surrounding governors and shared his letter of authority from King Artaxerxes? As we see through the rest of this book, the enemies of the Jews are relentless in the things

they do to frustrate the Jews and their work. We see that these enemies will say anything in order to stop the Jews from rebuilding.

You have no share, right, or claim. (1) This is the second time history records contention between the province of Judah and the province of Samaria, the first being Ezra 4:7-23 which occurred sometime after Ezra 10 and before Nehemiah 1. This contention between the two peoples started during the reign of Artaxerxes and will continue all the way through the Greek and Roman Empires. When Jesus arrives and teaches the people, we see a very clear picture of the animosity between the Jews in Judah and the Samaritans in Samaria. (This division between Samaritan and Jew exists today.) In 6 AD, the Romans combined Samaria and Judah into a single province, Judea, but kept the separated districts of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Palestine (Paralia). (2) It is clear that the Jews in Judah (such as Nehemiah here) did not view the people of Samaria as true Jews. This is the first instance of a religious divide between the two peoples. And this divide continued until Jesus who upheld the divide between them--though Jesus taught that His gospel is for ALL people. In short, Jesus would agree that the Samaritans have no share, right, or claim to the Messiah/Christ. However, the Samaritans (and ALL people) have a share, a right, and a claim to the Gospel (John 4:7-9, 4:19-23). (3) Zerubbabel had said the same thing to the enemies of the Jews when they were building the temple (Ezra 4:1-5).

Arise and build. The Hebrew says the Jews will arise and build the walls. The Greek says that the Jews are pure and will build the walls. So the Greek is even more contentious between the Jews and the Samaritans.

3:1-32 Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, gate to gate.

[Levites]. There are a mixture of people who work on rebuilding the walls, but it appears that most of them are Levites.

Eliashib the high priest. (1) When Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple, Jeshua was the high priest. Eliashib is his grandson (Neh 12:10), the third high priest since the return from captivity. (2) Notice how the high priest, the most important job in the whole Jewish religion, is in the thick of it and helping rebuild the walls. Eliashib did not consider himself above this manual labor but instead helped rebuild this gate in some capacity.

Sheep Gate. (1) In this chapter, Nehemiah begins with the Sheep Gate and runs all the way around Jerusalem counter-clockwise. (2) The Sheep Gate would have been the closest gate to the temple. It was the middle of three gates on the north side of Jerusalem. (3) In Jesus' day, there was a pool near the Sheep Gate called Bethesda where an angel would come down, stir the water, and heal the first person in (John 5:2-4).

Meremoth son of Uriah. Meremoth was one of the Levite leaders who returned with Ezra (Ezra 8:33). He was one who had married a foreign wife (Ezra 10:36). He also worked on the other side of Jerusalem on the Angle (Neh 3:21).

Meshullam son of Berechiah. (1) See notes at Neh 2:10 on Tobiah. (2) We see that Meshullam also worked on a portion of the wall near his house on the other side of the Sheep Gate (Neh 3:30).

Tekoites. Tekoa was a village not far from Bethlehem. The prophet Amos was from there (Amos 1:1).

Did not put their necks to the work. (1) The Greek doesn't say nobles but instead gives the name Adorim. (2) Interesting that you have the high priest himself doing some work. But the rich leaders of Tekoa were too noble to do any work on the wall. Nehemiah made sure to note that in this log of builders.

Joiada son of Paseah. Nothing is known about Joiada, but Paseah was one who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:49).

Old Gate. In some translations, this is called the Jeshanah Gate. When looking at the above map, this was probably the Mishneh Gate.

Gibeon and Mizpah. These were towns north of Jerusalem.

Seat of the governor. It makes sense to see how this was the palace or throne of the governor of Judah. So this is where Sheshbazzar, Zerubbabel, Ezra, and now Nehemiah sat as governor. But why it is called "of the region west of the Euphrates River," I do not know. There were many governors west of the Euphrates.

Hananiah son of the perfumer. Interestingly, this man's father is not named. For some reason, he is just referred to as the perfumer. But if one was to treat the Greek word here as a name, it would be Joachim.

Broad Wall. The Broad Wall was a specific wall that was wider than most walls. On the top of the wall, it was wide enough for regular traffic, and it was possibly wide enough for there to be small rooms or walkways within the wall. This was probably one of the busiest places in the city and might have been where the largest entrance to the city would be.

Rephaiah son of Hur. Could this be the same Hur who helped Aaron hold Moses' arms so that Joshua would win against the Amalekites (Ex 17:10-12)? He is of the tribe of Judah and a big leader. It does make sense that his great, great, etc. grandson is now one of the two leaders over Jerusalem, the other being Shallum in verse 12.

Malchijah son of Harim. There were two men named Harim who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:32, 2:39). One was a priest, the other was either of Judah or of Benjamin.

Hasshub son of Pahath-moab. Pahath-moab had returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:6).

Tower of the Ovens. This is also translated as Tower of Furnaces.

His daughters. From the beginning of this log of builders, we saw that the high priest is even helping. Here, someone took note that these daughters of Shallum are helping too. I'm sure the people did not require or ask the women to help. These daughters are honored by being added to the log because they did something they did not have to do. They had a heart to be a part of this work right alongside all the men and their father.

Valley Gate. The amount of men who worked on the sections of the wall on either side of the Valley Gate are surprisingly few. This is the gate that Nehemiah exited when he inspected the walls at night. Based on the amount of people working on these walls, we see that these walls were the most intact of all the walls. That is, Nehemiah saw some of the best walls when he was inspecting them. It looks like the northern side of the city was most in need of repair.

Beth-haccherem. Based on Jer 6:1, this was a city on a hill that could be seen from Bethlehem.

He built it. This repeated phrase about Malchijah is different in Greek. There, it says that "he and his sons" installed the doors, bolts, and bars.

Pool of Shelah. This pool was probably named after Judah's third son, Shelah, who was the oldest to live (not being killed by God) and who Judah did not give to Tamar.

Binnui son of Henadad. Binnui also worked on another part of the wall (see Neh 3:24). He also appears to be one of the leading Levites because he is listed after Jeshua (Neh 10:9).

Ezer son of Jeshua. This might be the same Jeshua who was high priest in Zerubbabel's day.

The Angle. This is translated differently in translations. Literally, it means "the Angle," but the best translation is probably "at the corner."

Surrounding area. This is translated differently across translations. Literally, the Hebrew says, "men of the circle." The Greek is hard to translate as the last word is probably a proper noun, "Ecchechar." The best translation is probably, "men of the surroundings."

Ophel. From Scriptures beginning with the times of the kings, this appears to be a hill that was southeast of the temple.

Zadok son of Immer. From Ezra 2:36-37, we see that he was a priest.

Shemaiah son of Shecaniah. Based on the family of Shecaniah (see note at 2:10), Shemaiah's sister had married Tobiah the Ammonite.

Malchijah. Most translations say he was one of the goldsmiths. This could be the meaning of that Hebrew word, but it is also a proper name, which means the Hebrew is better translated, "son of Tsorephi." Since this is the only time in the whole Bible that this Hebrew word appears, it seems that "son of Tsorephi" is the best translation. In fact, the Greek is clear, saying that he was son of Sarephi.

Inspection Gate. This is the same as the Miphkad or Muster Gate.

Sheep Gate. Nehemiah started with the Sheep Gate in verse 1. We have come full-circle around Jerusalem (counterclockwise) detailing who worked on which part of the wall.

4:1-5 Opponents threaten the builders.

Powerful men of Samaria. (1) "Men" is not the best translation here. Both in the Hebrew and the Greek, "army" is a better translation. (2) The Greek adds "that is" implying that the Sanballat's brothers is the same thing as the army of Samaria.

Jews. In the Greek, instead of the first two questions, it reads, "Is it true that these Jews are building their city?" What they are building. In the Greek, it reads, "Do they sacrifice or eat in their place?"

Fox. Verses 2 and 3 are examples of the many insults Sanballat and Tobiah threw at the Jews often. They call the Jews weak, they mock the Jews' sacrifices, they mock the Jews' drive to finish, and they say that a fox could knock down whatever the Jews may build.

[Verse 5]. In the Greek, verse 5 ends after "do not cover their sin."

Listen, our God. Nehemiah takes this time to pray to God. This is his third prayer in this book.

Anger. The word here is anger. What Nehemiah is saying is the same as what Jeremiah said about those who plotted against him ([Jer 18:23](#)).

4:6 Half the wall is completed.

[Verse 6]. In the Greek, this verse is not there.

Half of its height. The Jews work quickly and very soon finish half of Jerusalem's wall! Unfortunately, their opposition will become even more intense.

4:7-10 Opponents dishearten the builders.

Arabs, Ammonites, Ashdodites. (1) "Ashdodites" does not appear in the Greek. (2) This shows that the Jews have enemies all around! Sanballat and Tobiah were to the north in the province of Samaria. The Ashdodites would be to the west in the province of Palestine. The Ammonites were to the east, probably in another province there. The Arabs were to the southeast, probably in another province.

Became furious. In 2:19, the Jews' enemies already despised them. In 4:1 when work had begun, they became furious. In 4:7 when the work is half done, they become furious again. For whatever reason, even though Nehemiah has a letter from the king himself, the enemies of the Jews hate seeing Jerusalem being rebuilt! Throw it into confusion. First, the enemies tried to ridicule the Jews from the outside. When that didn't work, they are now trying to break their morale from the inside. Verse 10 is about a demoralizing song that made its way into Jerusalem.

Prayed to our God. Others joined Nehemiah in prayer. This is his fourth prayer in this book.

Stationed a guard. They stationed a guard with the hopes to keep spies out.

It was said. The guard was posted but some damage had been done. When David was becoming famous and more popular than Saul, there was a popular song in the nation (1Sam 18:7-9). Just as David's song was poison to Saul, the song of the enemies of the Jews was poison to them. This verse is the demoralizing song that made its way around. Why else would Nehemiah record the song from the enemies of the Jews?

4:11-14 Opponents attack the builders.

Kill them. First, the enemies tried to ridicule the Jews from the outside. Then they tried to break the morale of the Jews from the inside. Now, they are taking a more direct approach: physical confrontations and fighting. They said to us. This section is very hard to translate. The idea is that there are Jews who lived near or in Samaria came and told Nehemiah ten times that the Samaritans plan to attack them. We see that Nehemiah treats this as a declaration of war.

Don't be afraid of them. The way Nehemiah places soldiers at the wall and his speech here, it seems that the Jews are prepared for an all-out war between them and the Samaritans.

4:15-23 The builders' readiness for battle.

Enemies heard. First, the enemies plan to attack with their army. Then the Jews hear about it and set up their defenses. Then the enemies hear that the Jews have set up their defenses and stopped their attack. Many of the workers went back to the work on the wall. But as this section describes, the people were still ever-ready for an attack from their enemies.

Half did the work. We see that the number of workers at the wall has been reduced to half. This is because the other half of the workers at the wall are holding all the weapons and armor for war. Verse 21 says that they held the weapons and armor all day long.

Laborers. The laborers, the ones who went to and fro with supplies were the ones who worked with one hand and held their weapon with the other hand.

Builders. Most weapons were too large to carry while building. So half the men held the weapons and armor. But it was possible to work while having a sword strapped on.

Trumpeter. As we see in verses 19-20, the trumpet was the signal that everyone take their weapons and armor and rally to the trumpet to defend the city. The trumpeter stayed with Nehemiah so that the blow of the trumpet would be official, coming from the governor. This is how they remained united even though they were spread out all around the city.

Guard by night and work by day. Nehemiah didn't cause the Jews to lose sleep over all this readiness. A guard was stationed to keep watch at night while everyone who had a duty during the day could focus on their duties.

[Job summary]. In short, these were all the duties: (1) builders who worked with sword strapped on, (2) workers who held the rest of the weapons and the armor, (3) laborers who went to and fro who held their weapon in one hand and worked with the other, (4) trumpeter who stayed with Nehemiah who would call everyone to war, and (5) guards who kept watch at night when everyone else slept.

Never took off our clothes. That is, they didn't take the time to return to their homes to change. This shows that both night and day, everyone stayed at the wall. No one returned to their homes. Whatever energy they had, they were working to get this wall finished, literally, as quickly as humanly possible.

Carried weapon when washing. This phrase is hard to translate. (1) First, some say that the men took their weapons with them when they washed in water. Unfortunately, the Greek does not contain this phrase. It appears to me that the Hebrew is saying that each man kept his weapon (and his same clothes) even when washing. (2) Second, some say that each man had his weapon and his water jar.

5:1-6 Injustice among the people.

[Chapter 5]. This chapter is somewhat of an intermission from the Jerusalem wall and the enemies of the Jews. That opposition and the completion of the wall is in chapter 6. Why is chapter 5 in the middle? My only guess is that it shows that Nehemiah had more going on than just rebuilding the wall. While all that was happening, he still had to be governor and help the people with their problems. It makes me wonder, in the 2 months or so when all this was going on, did Nehemiah get much sleep?

People and their wives. Nehemiah mentions that it is not only the people, but he specifically mentions that the wives are also complaining about what appears to be widespread poverty. And when they talk, they mention their sons and daughters also. We see that everyone who is affected by this poverty is complaining to Nehemiah.

We can eat and live. The first complaint listed is simply a problem with poverty. Even though this is a simple problem, it is even more so a serious one. People are asking for means to get food and live! This isn't just a complaint, it's a desperate cry for help! People are hungry and they are not able to buy food. Never let the word "poverty" be just a word. It's a very serious problem. Never let it be just another problem. What is it like to be so poor that you don't know where you can get food or even where you can find a means so that you can get food? Poverty is more than just a social issue. The love of God demands that this is a social responsibility.

Famine. This second complaint is also very serious. Because of a famine, farmers are mortgaging their property away in order for them to buy food. When the farmers cannot produce food, and the farm, which is the means of producing food, must be sold for the farmer to eat, you know this famine must be very, very bad.

King's tax. This third complaint is taxes. When people cannot make enough money on their own to feed themselves and pay taxes, what is the next option they are turning to? They are taking out loans. Now, if you cannot make enough money to eat and to pay taxes, then how can you have enough money to eat, pay taxes, and pay back the loan you took out in order to pay for the first two things?

Slavery. The fourth complaint is slavery. So when you don't have the means to make money because you mortgaged off your farm, and you don't have enough money to pay your taxes and your loans, what option is left? What else could someone do who has no property nor any money? They can sell themselves or their children. When the loaner and the mortgage company comes knocking, there is nothing else one can do but to become a slave.

Extremely angry. There is plenty of reasons to become very angry at these complaints. Now, is Nehemiah angry at these people for complaining when they shouldn't be? I mean, didn't Paul say to do everything without complaining or arguing (Php 2:14)? He is not angry at them. Maybe Nehemiah is angry at the system. Is Nehemiah angry at the king for charging taxes? Is Nehemiah angry at a bad economic year because of this famine? He is not angry at them. What is Nehemiah angry at? Well, he's angry at the injustice that has been caused. And he is angry at the common thread among all of these complaints. If someone cannot find food to eat because of poverty, that means someone is not allowing the poor to glean the fields. If someone is having to mortgage their farm, that means there is a mortgage company--as it were. If someone is having to take out a loan to pay their taxes, that means there is a loaning bank. If someone is selling themselves and/or their family as slaves, that means there is a slave-owner. What is the common thread in all these stories? Someone is making money off of the very lives of people. As the poor become poorer to the point where their only option is to be slaves, this means that someone out there is getting richer off of them. For example, if a family cannot afford both food and their taxes, is offering them a loan the best option for them? NO! It is the worst! That is what drives people into an uncontrollable spiral from which it is impossible for them to escape. These loan sharks know this and I'm sure they hope that one day their loanee will become their slave. (Deut 15:7-11, Lev 25:39-43) And this is where Nehemiah finds the source of all this injustice. As we see, Nehemiah doesn't blame the king, nor the economy for what's happening. He finds that leaders of Jews have been violating God's Law in their business practices. This can be seen more clear in the Greek. At the end of verse 5, instead of saying, "belong to other men," the Greek says, "belong to the nobles."

[New Testament solution]. Nehemiah is going to find that the leaders were breaking God's Law. Under the New Testament, what is the solution for injustices such as these that the Jews complained about? The solution ought to be... the church! When there was a famine in Jerusalem, Paul saw to it that many churches could contribute to help buy food for the Christians in Jerusalem. The church should always be ready to help people so that there is not a single needy Christian in the world (Acts 4:34, 11:27-30, Rom 15:25-26, 2Cor 8:13-15).

5:7-13 Nehemiah enforces the no-interest law.

Charging his countrymen interest. Very early on in Moses giving the Law, he commanded that moneylenders not charge the poor interest (Ex 22:25). Later in Deuteronomy, Moses commanded that the Israelites not

charge their fellow Israelite interest on anything (Deut 23:19-20). These moneylenders are not only exploiting the poor but are directly breaking the Law. And in the middle of those passages is Moses' direct law against what they are doing (Lev 25:35-38).

Buy back our countrymen. It appears that many Jews across the world had become slaves. Other Jews, such as Nehemiah have been freed from captivity. They have taken up the duty to free the many Jews from slavery so that all Jews can enjoy God's restoration during the Persian Empire.

Now you sell your own countrymen. No wonder Nehemiah is extremely angry at these nobles and has called an assembly against them! Their drive to make money off the poor is reversing what Nehemiah has been trying to do. The Jews have been trying to free their brethren from slavery. These nobles have been putting many into slavery because of their greed.

Remained silent and could not say a word. Why were they silent? We see from the context that they change their evil ways. So they are not trying to hide anything. They are either speechless because they had no idea they were doing wrong and now they do, or because they knew they were doing wrong and now they have no defense for their actions. Plus, if they spoke, maybe they were afraid they would misspeak and bring even more punishment on themselves.

Stop charging them interest. This is hard to translate. It either says stop charging interest or it means to forgive the whole loans. The Hebrew and the Greek could be taken either way. The Law only required that interest not be taken. From the next verse, it looks like the loans and all the payments taken are returned to the poor.

Hundredth of the money. This does not appear in the Greek. In the Greek, it seems to say that everything was returned to the poor. In the Hebrew, it looks like the moneylenders are told to return what they loaned away and 1% of what they had received as payment. Why one hundredth? It is very possible that this was the amount of interest that was being charged: 1%. If this is true, then we see how mad Nehemiah became when the interest was so low (by our standards)! Even 1% was not acceptable in light of God's Law.

We will return these things. Even though these nobles were doing such evil things to the poor, they quickly and willingly repented and made things right. Paul hopes that rich Christians would do the same thing (1Tim 6:17-19). (2) Who is a rich person? There are many, many different ways one could identify a rich person. In America, one could point to the rest of the world and recognize that every person in America is rich. But looking at America alone, there are a number of standards to identify the rich. I have chosen to use the median income for Americans, that is, the income where half of American households earn more and half earn less. For 2014, the median income was \$52,000. If you make more than that in a year or made more than that before you retired, then you are rich the American standard of median income. Whether we are above the median or below it, there is some way every American can be identified as rich. My point is this: Paul's instructions are for each and every one of us.

Shook the folds of my robe. Apparently, this was a common expression for Jews to show that they were finished with someone. Just as the Romans washed their hands to be finished with someone, as Pilate was with Jesus and the crowds (Matt 27:24), the Jews shook out their robes. Paul did this when he was preaching in Corinth and had his fill with the Jews there, saying, "Your blood is on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles" (Acts 18:6).

Amen. This event occurred just less than 15 years after Ezra gathered an assembly and told the people they had to divorce their pagan, foreign wives. We can see in both cases, the people are very willing to repent. Sure, Ezra and Nehemiah had their fair share of problems to deal with, but God's grace is on these people who have a heart to do what is right, even if it hurts their families or their wallets. They see that God's will is more important than anything else.

5:14-19 Nehemiah's abdications for the people.

20th year until 32nd year. These years were 444 to 433 BC, 12 years in total. They encompass chapters 2 through 12. Though from the dates Nehemiah gives in these chapters, all these events occurred within his first two years as governor.

Never ate the food allotted to the governor. It appears that the Persians treated their governors really well. Of course, being royalty and above the common person, the governors would eat well every day. Nehemiah explains what foods were given to him and his administration in verse 18. Because of all the hardships of the people as explained previously in this chapter, Nehemiah decides to give up all this food. I believe Nehemiah paid for his own food with his own money.

Governors who preceded me. And here we have a sticky phrase. What about Ezra who arrived in Judah as governor 14 years before? Did Ezra mistreat the people? Just to ask that question in the light of Ezra's very holy character feels wrong. It seems obvious that Nehemiah is talking about the governors who preceded Ezra. According to some sources (which I do not know), someone has said that there were three governors between Zerubbabel and Ezra who ruled in a 52-year window (Elnathan, Jehoezer, Ahzai). The

best explanation is that Ezra is talking about them. Now, these previous governors who mistreated the people, they could have been Persians or Jews. Even among God's people, there are good leaders and bad leaders. For example, during the time of the Kingdom of Judah, there were good kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah and there were evil kings such as Rehoboam and Manasseh. So these three previous governors could have been evil Jewish governors.

Taking food and wine. (1) If all the food listed in verse 18 is not enough for the governor every day, one can see how extravagant the previous governors were living! (2) The phrase right before this reads in the Hebrew, "They took of them bread and wine, besides 40 shekels of silver." It reads in the Greek, "They even took of them their last money, 40 didrachmons (drachmas) for bread and wine." The Greek says that these evil governors took the last of the people's money. Now, if the evil governors were before Ezra, wouldn't the people recover from this through the 14 years Ezra was governor? Maybe so. The Greek certainly makes it sound like Nehemiah came and relieved the people from an evil governor. It seems more likely to me that the Hebrew is correct here. Otherwise, it seems to imply that Ezra was an evil governor.

40 shekels of silver. (1) This must have been taxes that the governor himself had established. That is, there was no Persian law for this tax, the governor added it to the laws of Judah for himself. (2) The Hebrew says shekel which was the Jewish weighing unit. Now that they are after the captivity, maybe the Jews were still weighing things in shekels since that is what the Law's unit of weight is. The Greek says drachmas which is a Greek unit of weight. This is odd because the Greeks are not on the scene yet. Apparently, the translator directly translated shekel as drachma but did not make the proper conversion of the number. This is because 40 drachmas equal 12 shekels. So really, the Greek should read 134 drachmas (because this equals 40 shekels). The translator did not convert the number in Neh 10:32 either.

Devoted myself to the construction of the wall. The Greek reads, "In the work of the wall I treated them not with rigor." We see that the Greek focuses on Nehemiah's treatment of the workers, which better fits the context, and the Hebrew focuses on the wall itself.

150 Jews and officials. (1) In the Greek, "and rulers," is not there. (2) These 150 people were Nehemiah's administration. I believe Nehemiah is saying that all that meat was prepared for them all. Why else would an entire ox and six sheep and more be prepared? That was too much food for just one person!

One ox, six sheep, fowl, wine every 10 days. (1) These are the things that Nehemiah is giving up because of the hardships of the people. It would have seemed like a waste for that food to be eaten by the Persian officials while only Nehemiah did not eat with them. Because of Nehemiah's whole point of this chapter, I believe he is giving the food to the people. He also is refusing to live very well while there are people who are struggling to find enough food in order to live. (2) The only question I have is whether Nehemiah restricted all those officials from eating also. Did he give all the food away or did he give his portions of all the food away? At the very least, he would not be hosting daily parties for this administration--as governors or kings usually did. I believe it was the former, he forced his officials to also pay for their own food. (3) It is worth noting that King Solomon's provisions were more than 20 times Nehemiah's (1Kings 4:22-23)!

Remember me favorably, my God. (1) This is Nehemiah's fifth prayer in the book. (2) Nehemiah is the governor but sacrificing the governor's life. He sacrifices these things for the people, because he loves them. He loves them because he loves God. He wants God to look upon him favorably because he is doing this. Will God reward him for this great act of sacrifice? Yes! Paul wrote about this kind of sacrifice in 2Cor 8:1-15. Jesus Himself assures everyone that any act of sacrificial kindness will be rewarded, even if it is a glass of water. He said, "Whoever gives just a cup of cold water to drink to one of these little ones because he is a disciple because of My name since you belong to the Christ--I assure you: He will never lose his reward!" (combination of Matt 10:42, Mark 9:41). Nehemiah's example is an example for us to imitate.

6:1-4 Opponents attempt to harm Nehemiah.

No gaps, no doors. At this point, the wall itself is fully completed. All there is left is to build and secure the doors at each of the gates. Do the enemies of the Jews know that the wall is practically finished? I believe so. Even though Jerusalem has its walls of stone, the enemies of the Jews will just not give up.

Sanballat and Geshem. As explain in the notes at 2:17, Geshem the Arab was probably a governor of a province south or southeast of Judah. We see that since they have been opposing the Jews, Sanballat of Samaria and Geshem of his province have become allies against Nehemiah and the Jews.

Ono Valley. Ono was a village in the territory of Benjamin, south of Jerusalem. Why would Sanballat of Samaria to the north choose a location on the opposite side of Jerusalem? Probably because Geshem's province was down there. Perhaps this particular plan against Nehemiah's was Geshem's idea. Sanballat is just mentioned first because, throughout this book, he is the primary enemy of the Jews.

Great work and cannot come. Nehemiah knows that Sanballat and Geshem are his enemies. He knows that this plan is evil. He could accuse them of attempted assassination, but doesn't. Instead of focusing on their

evil intentions, Nehemiah focuses on his own good work: the wall. The walls are done and the doors are left; I have a feeling that Nehemiah could have gone down there if he really wanted to. Yet in the end, Nehemiah tells them: I'm busy with this good work. He was focused on his own good tasks instead of his enemies evil intentions. We should do the same, focused on God and doing His will instead of focusing on what our enemies are doing.

Four times. You think that Sanballat and Geshem would get the hint that Nehemiah is not going. They should assume that Nehemiah already knows their evil plan. How stubborn of them to keep trying, thinking that they have any chance of breaking Nehemiah's passion for Jerusalem's wall.

6:5-9 Opponents accuse Nehemiah of rebellion.

Fifth time. This is not in the Greek, but it is implied.

By his aide. Four times, Sanballat sent him letters which were delivered by some mailman. Now, Sanballat sends his personal servant with the letter to see Nehemiah face to face.

Jews plan to rebel. After Nehemiah visited Sanballat and the surrounding provinces with letters from the king, saying that he is to build this wall, Sanballat immediately began accusing Nehemiah of rebellion (Neh 2:19). So from the time the building of the wall started to this time when the building of the wall finished, Sanballat has been throwing around this political buzz word: rebellion. All this time, he has been trying to push Nehemiah's buttons.

These rumors will be heard by the king. Sanballat threatens Nehemiah saying that if Nehemiah doesn't meet them, then he will tell the king all this "evidence" about how Nehemiah is rebelling against the Persians. Nothing to these rumors. What Sanballat is doing can be called McCarthyism, which is attacking someone based on an incredible lack of evidence.

God, strengthen me. This is Nehemiah's sixth prayer in the book.

6:10-14 Opponents hire others to oppose Nehemiah.

Shemaiah. This is probably a Jew.

Who was restricted to his house. (1) "To his house" is added to the Scriptures. It literally says, "held back" (Hebrew) or "held together" (Greek). But this is probably implied because this is where Nehemiah goes to meet Shemaiah. (2) How to interpret this is disputed. Most believe that Shemaiah was confined to his own house, perhaps because of illness, old age, or uncleanness. But then why would Shemaiah tell Nehemiah to meet him in the temple if he is shut up in his house? Others believe that he had restricted himself to a place alone with God, probably a house in the temple. But then why does it say that Nehemiah went to his house if he was in the temple? To me, I get the following impression. Shemaiah calls Nehemiah to meet him at his house, Nehemiah sees that Shemaiah is a shut in there for whatever reason. So when Shemaiah tells Nehemiah to meet him in the temple so as to save Nehemiah's life, Nehemiah knows he is lying because he cannot leave his house.

Inside the temple. Throughout history, Jerusalem has been attacked many times. Sure, the city may have had walls around it at various times, but historical accounts show that the most secure place, with its own walls and towers, is the temple. That is, the temple doubled as a very, very fortified building. Of all the places in Jerusalem, it would have been the safest place in times of war. This is why Shemaiah tells Nehemiah to hide there.

Because they are coming to kill you. This phrase from Shemaiah seems to be a repeat of his last phrase. The first phrase does not appear in the Greek.

Man like me. (1) Nehemiah is the governor. Does a captain flee the ship, leaving the crew onboard? Does a general leave his army and stay in a fortress? Nehemiah is the governor and he is ready for his trumpet blower to blow at any time to call everyone to battle. If the governor runs away, everyone else would also. (2) This phrase about being like Nehemiah and running away is not in the Greek.

Enter the temple and live. Nehemiah asks this question, knowing the answer. Shemaiah is telling Nehemiah that he would be safe in the temple and would live. Nehemiah knows the exact opposite would happen. It appears that Nehemiah knows that if he enters the temple, he will die, not by the Samaritans, but by the Jews. It seems that Nehemiah is not a Levite because he is probably referring to the law that said a non-Levite must be killed if they enter the tent of meeting (Num 18:7). And this is Shemaiah's real plan, as we see in verse 13. He hopes that Nehemiah would enter the temple and be punished by his fellow Jews!

I will not go. This phrase is not found in the Greek.

Prophecy against me. This is not a prophecy from God--which is how we usually mean "prophecy." This is a prophecy in the generic sense--which simply means to foretell. Shemaiah is foretelling that Nehemiah would die by the his enemies so he instructed him to run to the temple. Of course, Shemaiah was not from God and what he foretold never came true.

Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. (1) How sneaky! Nehemiah already knows full well that these men are enemies. It was very sneaky for them to hire a Jew to trick Nehemiah into doing something bad. This was just another tactic that the Samaritans tried in stopping the Jews from building the wall. (2) Remember it saying that Shemaiah was restricted to his house? It's very possible that he had some kind of illness or infirmity that made him a shut in. Tobiah and Sanballat probably offered him money--something which he really needed--if he would prophecy against Nehemiah. Anyway, this is a reasonable possibility.

He was hired. Instead of this in the Hebrew, the Greek says that Tobiah and Sanballat "had hired a multitude against me." This fits better with verse 14.

My God. This is Nehemiah's seventh prayer.

Noadiah the prophetess and the other prophets. Just as Shemaiah falsely prophesied against Nehemiah in order to do him harm, he was not the only one. Nehemiah names Noadiah by name. Who knows what her plan was to harm Nehemiah. From this we see that many spys were hired to intimidate Nehemiah. He had enemies outside the city and had enemies inside the city too.

6:15-16 Rebuilding of the walls completed

52 days. Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem, rested 3 days, then 52 days after that, Jerusalem's walls were restored! These were very tall walls all the way around Jerusalem. To finish them within 2 months is incredible! To see how hard the people worked, see Neh 4:15-23.

25th day of Elul. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the date was September 16, 444 BC. It was a Monday. I could be very wrong about this. Working backward, they would have begun building the wall on July 26, 444 BC. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)

All the surrounding nations were intimidated. As we saw in Neh 2:19, nearly all the surrounding provinces are enemies to the Jews. Here, it explicitly says this. And look at the reversal. For nearly two months, these provinces have been trying to intimidate Nehemiah. Now, it is them who are intimidated by the Jews!

Accomplished by our God. The Jews are still God's people. Nehemiah gives God the credit for their endurance against their enemies and for turning their enemies' intimidation back on themselves. Any common person or nation would have despaired, but God's hand was in all of this. God didn't take away the Jews' enemies. God allowed their enemies to increase in their attacks. In the end, the Jews did not give up and God returned all that contention back upon the enemies of the Jews. In the end, God is glorified!

6:17-19 Tobiah continues to oppose Nehemiah.

Letters were sent. Often, when a country is at odds with another, they will blockade the other country, causing nothing to pass between them. Here, we see that this doesn't work with Tobiah (who was probably a leading official in Samaria).

Bound by oath. Essentially, Tobiah has a treaty with Judah because of the ways he is married into the Jews. Remember that his wife is a Jew (daughter of Shecaniah) and his daughter-in-law is a Jew (daughter of Meshullam). Because Neh 13:4 says that Eliashib the high priest was related to Tobiah, Tobiah's wife or his son's wife was probably a Levite. In short, this intermarriage with Tobiah will continue to cause a thorn in the Jews' side for years to come.

Kept mentioning Tobiah's good deeds. I'm not sure how to take this. It seems that because of this intermarriage, there are Jews who are treating Tobiah kindly like close family. Don't they realize that Tobiah is their enemy and wishes to harm Nehemiah, their governor?

Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me. (1) The wall is complete. The enemies of the Jews have been intimidated. But because of this intermarriage, Tobiah continues to attack Nehemiah. Even though the rest of the provinces have given up, Tobiah--with his "treaty" with the Jews--continues to be an enemy. (2) A lesson for us is: even when God has defeated the enemy, evil will still persist. It will not be until Jesus comes back that even the final enemy, death, is defeated. It is only then that God's people will cease to have enemies.

7:1-3 Instructions for the new walls.

Walls rebuilt and doors installed. Now that everything is finished, Nehemiah gives these instructions about the operation of the walls and the city.

Hanani. This was the same person who had travelled from Jerusalem to Susa and told Nehemiah about the wall. Nehemiah gives him a godly compliment and puts him in charge of the city. Essentially, he becomes mayor.

Hananiah. (1) In the Greek, "Hanani" is given a second time. (2) Hananiah was in charge of the military, much like a defense minister.

Until the sun is hot. Usually, a city's gates were opened at sunrise. Nehemiah is telling them to wait a while longer when the city is more awake. He probably gave this instruction in case an army might attack them at on any given day at sunrise, which was an opportune time for an attack.

[Dedication of the wall]. It is possible that Neh 12:27-43 happened around this time, even before chapter 8 when Ezra reads the Law. Because Neh 11:27 says that the Levites had to be sent for, this is probably after chapter 11 when many people settled in Jerusalem and other settled in villages across the province. Also, Neh 12:44 sounds like they had already established the vow from chapter 10.

7:4-5 Nehemiah finds the records of Zerubbabel's return to Jerusalem.

No houses had been built yet. This is not to be taken literally. We saw that back in Zerubbabel's day, the people were living in very nice houses (Hag 1:4). What is probably meant is that, now that Jerusalem's wall is complete, there is a lot of open space within the wall. Or, it is meant that those who came to Jerusalem with Nehemiah do not have houses of their own yet. See notes at Neh 11:1.

Registered by genealogy. What purpose behind this is unknown. Contrast this with when Satan inspired David to take up a census in 1Chr 21. Also contrast this when the Lord was angry at Israel and inspired David to take up a census in 2Sam 24. In both of those cases, it was a bad thing. Here, it appears to be a good thing. The difference must be that those were censuses and this is genealogical records. Instead of taking up a count of the people, it appears that Nehemiah just wants to recover the genealogical records that may have been lost in the captivity. These are their proof of which tribes they belong to.

Genealogical record of those who came back first. What Nehemiah found was the records from Zerubbabel which can also be found in Ezra 2.

7:6-73a Nehemiah's copy of Zerubbabel's records (Ezra 2)

[Ezra 2]. Beginning here through verse 73a, this chapter is the same as Ezra 2. However, between the three accounts of Ezra 2, Neh 7, and 1Esdras 5, there are many, many differences. For information about their differences and about the genealogical record itself, see notes at Ezra 2. All that is included here are the differences between the Hebrew and the Greek.

7:24. After Hariph, the Greek says, "Asen's descendents, 223."

7:26. The Greek does not combine Bethlehem and Netophah. Instead, it gives a separate amount for "Atopha," 56.

7:30. Hebrew's number is 621. Greek's number is 620.

7:34. Hebrew's number is 1254. Greek's number is 1252.

7:65. The Hebrew says, "Urim and Thummim." The Greek says, "to give light."

7:68-69. The Greek does not include verse 68 or the entry for the camels in verse 69.

7:70. The Hebrew says governor. The Greek says Nehemiah. This cannot be correct since this passage is about Zerubbabel. Unless this whole chapter is Nehemiah UPDATING of Zerubbabel's numbers. (There were 76 years between them.)

7:73b-8:8 Ezra reads from the Law of Moses.

[7:73b]. In the Greek, 73b is actually the beginning of 8:1. The confusion in the transition between chapters 7 and 8 is a confusing one. Of course, chapter divisions did not exist until the early 1200s. But most of the confusion comes in how similar this verse is to Ezra 3:1. Does this verse belong with the previous second and Ezra 2? Or does this verse belong in the following section about the festival of trumpets and the reading of the Law? After looking very closely, I believe it belongs with the following section; it is just a coincidence that the wording is the same. Perhaps the editor of the book of Nehemiah did this on purpose for some reason.

Square in front of the Water Gate. (1) This square would have been the very center of the city. (2) This phrase does not appear in the Greek.

Ezra the scribe. This is the very first mention of Ezra in Nehemiah's book. Ezra had become governor 14 years earlier. It must be implied that Nehemiah relieved Ezra and became governor. Ezra is still around, and because he is a priest and an expert in the Law, he is still a leader of the people. Perhaps when Nehemiah arrived, Ezra retired as governor to dedicate himself as a spiritual leader of the people since Ezra was a priest and an expert in the Law.

First day of the seventh month. (1) The Hebrew date would be Tishri 1, 444 BC. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the date was September 21, 444 BC. It was a Saturday. This is very fitting because the Sabbath was a day given for this very thing! I could be very wrong about this. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php) (2) This was a special holiday for the Jews called the Festival (or Feast) of Trumpets (Num 29:1-6). Since this day was a Sabbath and a special day where no work was to be done, this was an extra special day for the reading of the Law and the dedication of the wall.

In front of the Water Gate. I get the picture that Ezra is standing up high on the wall above the Water Gate, facing into Jerusalem at the main square. He would be facing west and the people would be facing east.

Wooden platform. I wonder if this platform was similar (except for the material used) to the one Solomon made for himself when he prayed at the dedication of the first temple (2Chr 6:13).
Made for this purpose. This phrase does not appear in the Greek.
All the people stood up. This was their posture during the reading of the Law.
With their hands uplifted. This was their posture during the prayer. Paul mentioned the same posture, saying, "I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up clean hands without anger or argument" (1Tim 2:8).
Bowed down with faces to the ground. This was their posture during worship.
Who were Levites. (1) These were the leading Levites, probably priests, who explained and translated the Law for the people. A number of them helped lead the prayer in chapter 9 (Neh 9:4-5). (2) The Greek only lists the names of the first three men.
Translating. This implies that Ezra was reading in Hebrew and they were translating it into Aramaic. Aramaic was the language of the day. Nehemiah calls their dialect Judahite in Neh 13:24.

8:9-12 The people celebrate the Festival of Trumpets after the reading.

The governor. This title for Nehemiah does not appear in the Greek. This title appears at the beginning of verse 10, leaving it open as to whether Ezra or Nehemiah is the governor. Of course, because of 10:1 in both the Hebrew and the Greek, we see that Nehemiah is the governor.
Do not mourn or weep. Why? The people are saddened over the reading of the Law and how much they had neglected it. The reason Nehemiah and Ezra say this is because of this festival. It was a festival filled with the blowing of trumpets: a very joyful festival!
Send portions to those who have nothing. (1) This is the same way the Jews celebrated Purim, which was established only about 8 years before! Of course, this is also an example of the compassion that the Jews had for each other. They shared with others who were too poor to share in the celebration. The richer Jews joined together to make sure all of them could celebrate this very special day. (2) This is in contrast to the Corinthians who were not sharing the Lord's Supper with their fellow Christians. Paul had strong words to say against them (1Cor 11:20-34). But this compares to the Macedonians selfless giving (2Cor 8:1-5).
Joy of the Lord is your stronghold. Nehemiah says that joy is a foundational emotion for God's people. God wanted the Jews to celebrate on all their festivals. Did God expect them to fulfill His command to bring sacrifices and such? Of course, but God also wanted his people to express their joy. Nehemiah might have had Deut 16:11,14-15 in mind.
Great celebration. The people's first reaction was sadness. I imagine that nearly all of them were hearing God's Law for the very first time. I'm sure many of them realized how far they had strayed from God's covenant with them. The world can be cruel which brings sadness; the world can be beautiful which brings joy. There are times to weep and mourn and there are times to laugh and dance, as Solomon said (Ecc 3:4). Though sadness is a very important part of repentance, this was not the time for sadness. This day was a festival from the Lord to be filled with trumpets. Ezra and Nehemiah want the people to have joy and be thankful to hear and to understand the Law. This is a time of restoration, much like the celebration when the prodigal son came home (Luke 15:18-24)! On any other day, sadness would be an appropriate response. In fact, 23 days later, the people assemble for a day of humiliation and confession (Neh 9:1-2). But today, during the Festival of Trumpets, this was a day to listen to God's Law anew and to celebrate the greatness of God!

8:13-18 The people observe the Festival of Booths.

On the second day. This was the second day of the month. The Hebrew date would be Tishri 2, 444 BC.
Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the date was September 22, 444 BC. It was a Sunday. I could be very wrong about this. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)
Assembled to study. The Law was read to everyone. With it fresh in their minds, this was a good time for the leaders to get together and study what it means for them.
They found written. From when they read the Law, I'm sure they took note that in the same month, two weeks later, God prescribed another Festival for them: the Festival of Booths. This was probably one of the reasons they assembled, to discuss this upcoming festival and any other things they might have neglected.
Spread the news. This time, they informed the people so that everyone would be prepared to celebrate again, this time for a whole week.
Wild olive. The Greek reads "cypress trees."
The people went out. The Festival of Booths was celebrated on the 15th day of the same month (Num 29:12). Therefore, the Hebrew date would be Tishri 15, 444 BC. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the date was October 5, 444 BC. It was a Saturday. I could be very wrong about this. (http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)
Square by the Water Gate, square by the Ephraim Gate. (1) The Water Gate was the eastern entrance to the main part of the city. This is the main square where Ezra had read the Law two weeks before. The Ephraim

Gate was connected to the Broad Wall, which was probably the main entrance on the west side of the city. In a way, I believe Nehemiah means: from east to west, the people celebrated by living in booths. (2) The Greek does not say the Water Gate but "of the city." Since the Water Gate was the entrance into the main part of the city, the meaning is the same.

Had not celebrated like this since Joshua son of Nun. (1) We know that the Jews celebrated the Festival of Booths immediately after Zerubbabel and the Jews with him arrived in Jerusalem (Ezra 3:4). By saying that this festival had not been celebrated like this since the time of Joshua is saying that this was the greatest celebration of this festival since the time of Moses, the man of God. (2) The Festival of Booths was all about reminding the Israelites that they are foreigners and sojourners on earth. However, the Jews have been restored to Jerusalem during Cyrus the Great. They have rebuilt the temple during Darius I. They have rebuilt the walls during Artaxerxes I. The irony is that the Jews now have a home and have fully restored their inheritance in Judah yet their celebration of being sojourners on earth is the greatest it had ever been since the time of Moses, before they had entered the Promised Land. This shows that the exile has taught the Jews a renewed importance of seeing how their home is not truly on earth but with God!

Tremendous joy. The Jews are celebrating for all the reasons I have discussed regarding this chapter. On top of all the spiritual reasons, they are also rejoicing because they can do all of this within the safety of Jerusalem's new walls. Their celebration is uninhibited; their joy is tremendous!

Ezra read out of the book. Ezra already did this two weeks before during the Festival of Trumpets. Either Ezra is reading through the Law again, or he is continuing to read through all five books of Moses. Perhaps to leave more time for celebration, Ezra divided up reading of the entire Law across all seven days.

On the eighth day there was an assembly. What ordinance does he mean? This was explicitly given by God in Lev 23:36.

9:1-3 The people's confessions after the readings.

24th day of this month. The Hebrew date would be Tishri 24, 444 BC. Using a modern-day Hebrew calendar calculator, the date was October 14, 444 BC. It was a Monday. I could be very wrong about this.

(http://www.floridajewish.com/jewish_date_converter.php)

Assembled. What were the reasons for them to assemble in fasting, sackcloth, and dust is not known. It seems that their celebrations (Festival of Trumpets, Festival of Booths) are over. The people decide that this is the time to humble themselves in sadness. This was an assembly of confession and worship before God.

Earth on their heads. The Greek says "ashes," more in line with the Jewish tradition of "sackcloth and ashes."

Separated themselves from all foreigners. The Jews did the same thing when they celebrated the Passover and dedicated the second temple (Ezra 6:21). This is a total but temporary separation from the Gentiles around them. This is not like the separation that took place in Ezra 10.

Confessed their sins and the guilt of their fathers. This chapter is all about an assembly of confession. Most of the chapter is their prayer to God, but the people want to approach God in view of their sins and their fathers' sins.

Fourth of the day. These two occurrences do not appear in the Greek.

9:4-6 Prayer of praise.

[Levite names]. In the Greek, Bani, Bunni, and Bani are not listed but instead reads, "the sons of," in place of each of those names. This also happens one time at Neh 10:14-15.

[Ezra's prayer]. In the Greek, Verse 6 begins with "Ezra said," showing that starting in verse 6, Ezra prays nearly all of this prayer.

[Cross references]. This prayer follows the books of Moses very closely. If you wish to find the events described in this prayer in the books of Moses, see the cross references in your Bible.

All their host. Most likely, these are the angels. If so, then this is an explicit Scripture showing that God created the angels; angels are not eternal like God is. Or, these are the stars, which we know God created on day four (Gen 1:14-19).

Praise. This part of the prayer in verse 5 is an echo from ancient prayers from 1Chr 16:36, Ps 41:13, 106:48, and 1Chr 29:13.

9:7-15 Prayer over Israel's ancient history.

Signs and wonders. In the Greek, it adds "in Egypt" after "signs and wonders" and before "on Pharaoh."

A name for Yourself. Does this mean that God had a great reputation in Nehemiah's day? Or does it mean that God's reputation specifically about the parting of the Red Sea (and the beginning of the Jewish people) was still greatly known in Nehemiah's day? I do not know; I guess it could be either or both.

You gave them. These are interesting descriptions for the Law. Here are the literal descriptions in Hebrew and Greek. Hebrew: straight judgments, trustworthy laws, good appointments and commands. Greek: straight judgments, laws, truth, commandments (?), and good commands.

Through your servant Moses. The Greek reads, "By the hand of your servant Moses."

Bread from heaven. The psalmist calls manna "bread from heaven" in Ps 105:40. Later, Jesus said that He is the true, spiritual bread from heaven (John 6:30-41).

9:16-21 Prayer over Israel's disobedience and God's faithfulness.

Because of your great compassion. Notice that in this section, the people admit that God had the right to abandon His disobedient people. Instead, they recognize that God must be filled with love, compassion, mercy, faithfulness, forgiveness, and guidance because He keeps providing these things for His people. Your good Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called "good." This is in reference to when God's Spirit was given to the elders who later became called the Sanhedrin (Num 11:16-17).

9:22-25 Prayer over Israel's more recent history.

Sihon. The Greek says, "Land of Sihon king of Heshbon." The Hebrew says, "Land of Sihon, even the land of the king of Heshbon." We see from Num 21:26 that the Greek is more correct.

Their descendants went in and possessed. This is the Hebrew reading. The Greek says, "They inherited." And a fat land. This phrase does not appear in the Greek.

9:26-31 Prayer over Israel's continual disobedience and God's discipline.

And they turned. This phrase does not appear in the Greek.

Gracious and compassionate God. The Greek reads, "You are powerful and having compassion and merciful."

9:32-35 Prayer confessing that Israel has been wicked and God has been righteous.

Great, mighty. The Greek adds "powerful" at between "God" and "great."

Do not view lightly all the hardships. In other words, about all the punishments the Jews have received from the nations God used to punish them, these things have been great sufferings. In other words, "our discipline has been very harsh for us."

[Verse 33]. This verse is a great summary of this entire prayer.

9:36-37 Prayer about Israel's current state.

Harvest goes to the kings. The prayer says that some of their discipline remains by having to pay taxes to the Persians.

9:38 Invitation to the vow.

In view of all this. The time of confession, worship, and prayer is over. This verse and all of chapter 10 is about what the people do in response to those things. The leaders are inviting everyone to come and be a part of a written vow, a written covenant, with the purpose of helping the people stay pure.

Sealed. Can this vow be any more official? It is written and it is sealed. It is not sealed in the sense that the document is protected with a physical seal. Neh 10:1 indicates that this is more like a notary seal. Just as a notary is a witness to an official document today, the same thing is happening here, probably with their family seals.

10:1-27 Names of those who signed the vow.

[Ezra and Eliashib]. For whatever reason, neither Ezra, the former governor, nor Eliashib, the current high priest, is listed here. How very strange! We know that Ezra did not die between chapter 9 and chapter 10 because he returns in chapter 12. And Eliashib was high priest throughout Ezra's days, and is specifically called the high priest in Neh 3.

Seraiah. He was the chief official of God's temple (Neh 11:11).

Bani. In verse 14 and 15 in the Greek, it does not say "Bani, Bunni" but instead says "the sons of Bani." Compare to Neh 9:4.

10:28-29 Invitation for everyone to join in the vow.

Rest of the people. The above names are the ones who signed and sealed the written vow. But anyone who wants to join in the vow is encouraged to do so. (The only difference is that any common person who wants to join did not sign the vow.)

Separated themselves from the surrounding peoples. That is, those who have chosen to not follow the pagan practices of the non-Jews around them and be identified as a Jew who obeys God.

A sworn oath. (1) There are specific items that the people are vowing to do which are found in verses 30-39. But really, the people are committing themselves with an oath to follow and obey ALL the words of God. (2) An oath like this was made in the days of Ezra (Ezra 10:5). There are two big differences between Ezra's oath and Nehemiah's oath. First, Ezra's oath was only about the foreign practices of the foreign wives and separating themselves from them while Nehemiah's oath included many things, most of which are found in chapter 5. Second, Ezra's oath was merely spoken while Nehemiah's oath was a written and sealed document.

Yahweh our Lord. This is how it reads in the Hebrew. In the Greek it just reads, "the Lord."

10:30-39 Copy of the vow.

Not give our daughters in marriage to the surrounding peoples. (1) Why should the Jews not intermarry with the surrounding people? Firstly, God told them not to (Deut 7:3-4). God said that this was so that they would not be carried away from God to worship other gods. We saw that this was the case in Ezra 9-10 when the Jews had foreign wives who were committing detestable practices (Ezra 9:1). We saw this again in Nehemiah 6 as we are told that the Jews had twice married into the Samaritan family of Tobiah (Neh 6:17-19). This intermarriage with Tobiah caused problems from Neh 2 all the way through Neh 13. Therefore, we see from both Ezra and Nehemiah that God said this for a reason. (2) Sadly, about 12 to 20 years later when Nehemiah returns to the province of Judah, he finds that they are guilty of this (Neh 13:23-28). We will see this as a recurring theme in this vow. We will see how many of the things listed in this vow were completely neglected 12 to 20 years later when Nehemiah returns.

Merchandise. The Hebrew reads, "merchandise or any grain." The Greek reads, "wares and all kinds of merchandise."

Not buy on the Sabbath. (1) This is simply an echo of the fourth commandment about keeping the Sabbath holy. (2) Sadly, about 12 to 20 years later, the Jews are working on the Sabbath and bought a lot of food on the Sabbath (Neh 13:15-22).

Not cultivate the land in the seventh year and cancel all debts. This is an echo of the Sabbath year law, which occurred every seventh year. No farming was to be done and all debts were to be cancelled (Ex 23:10-11, Lev 25:3-7, Deut 15:1-3).

We will impose the following on ourselves. The specifics of the following commands are not exactly stated in the Law of Moses. These appear to be commands that will help them better fulfill commands invented by the people that God gave them.

One third shekel. (1) Ex 30:11-16 mentions this amount at the time Moses took up a census. This was for each person over the age of 20. There was no command for this money to be a yearly contribution, but Nehemiah is making it one. (2) One third shekel is the same as 1/8 ounce and 1/3 drachma. (The Greek says 1/3 drachma which was not converted correctly. See note at Neh 5:15 on silver.) As of March 2016, this amount of silver is worth \$2 today. (3) This may be the same temple tax that was called the double-drachma in Jesus' day (Matt 7:24). If the double drachma is the same temple tax, the amount in Jesus' day was about 6 times more than what Moses and Nehemiah commanded. The double drachma is equal to 3/4 ounce of silver, or \$10 today.

Bread before the Lord. The way this verse is translated, it is hard to tell whether this silver was used to pay for the bread, the offerings, the festivals, and for all the work on the temple, or this silver was paid along with the other things. That definitely is a small amount of silver that would buy all the bread, offerings, and festivals, so I believe the silver was in addition to the other things.

Wood to burn on the altar. The command written in the Law was that the fire on the altar must never go out (Lev 6:8-13).

Firstfruits of the land. God gave the firstfruits of the land, when people brought offerings, to the priests (Num 18:11-13). More firstfruits are mentioned again in 10:37.

Firstborn son and livestock. God wanted the firstborn son and domestic animal be consecrated to Him (Ex 13:1-2, 13:11-13).

Offerings. The Hebrew reads, "The firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings...." The Greek reads, "The firstfruits of our dough...."

Tenth. The Levites, which was the tribe without any land of their own in the Promised Land because they were the tribe of priests who were to be found everywhere, were to receive a tenth from all the other tribes (Num 18:21-29).

Not neglect the house of our God. (1) All of this was so that the priests and Levites could continue to be the spiritual servants of the Jews and keep working at the temple. (2) Sadly, about 12 to 20 years later, we see that the people neglected the temple by not bringing all of their firstfruits and tithes to the temple because the Levites had stopped working and had returned to their farms (Neh 13:10).

11:1-24 Leaders of the people who lived in Jerusalem.

Live in Jerusalem. Do you remember Neh 7:4 that said no houses had been built yet? It was probably talking about how spacious the city of Jerusalem is now. If you look at the map, you will see that the actual city is very small compared to the size of the wall around it. The places that need settling are the areas between the most dense parts of the city and the wall. For whatever reason, the Jews need more people to leave their homes out in the villages across the province and live within Jerusalem's walls. That is what this chapter is about.

One out of ten. Again, for whatever reason, it looks like they wanted 10% of all the Jews to live in Jerusalem. The men who volunteered. There were those who wanted to stay in their towns; they cast lots for those people.

But for those who volunteered to move to Jerusalem, they were praised.

[Verses 3-19]. (1) This passage is parallel to 1Chr 9:1-22a. The differences between these passages are many and are major. Yet because of their similarities, they appear to be parallel passages. After spending many hours researching, I believe I found the best solution/theory. In short, 1Chr 9 was compiled in the 300s BC, after the time of Nehemiah. So the author is looking into the distant past to the time of David while having a more recent history of Nehemiah in mind. 1Chr 9 is not about the time of Nehemiah but sort of refers to it. 1Chr 9 is about specific people that David established to live in Jerusalem in preparation of the temple. Neh 11 is not about the time of David but sort of refers to it. Neh 11 is about the families, many of whom can be traced back to David, that are settling in Jerusalem in Nehemiah's day. For example, Sallu in Neh 11:7 lived in the time of David, not Nehemiah. But the family of Sallu is now resettling the same area. I believe either Joel son of Zichri or Judah son of Hassenuah is the leader of the Benjaminites (which includes the Sallu family) in Nehemiah's day (Neh 11:9). When you read 1Chr 9, it reads like all of them are actual people. When you read Neh 11, it reads like these are families with their leaders being mentioned. This explains nearly all the differences and similarities in the two passages. For more information, see my hand-out: Number Differences in Nehemiah's Resettling. (2) 1Chr 9:18 mentions the King's Gate. This gate did not exist in Nehemiah's day. Scholars said that the temple itself (not of the city) had a gate on the east side that was used exclusively by the king when he would enter the temple. This appears to be supported by 2King 16:17-18 and Ezk 46:1-2.

Son of Hagedolim. This is how it reads in the Hebrew. In the Greek, it reads, "Son of one of the great men."

[Verses 15-31]. These verses are VERY different in the Greek. The Greek omits many, many names.

Ophel. See Neh 3:26. This hill was in Jerusalem, southeast of the temple.

Command of the king. Both the Hebrew and the Greek mention a command from the king but only the Hebrew gives more information. It looks like there was a Persian law that allowed singers to be given an allowance of money from the taxes. Or, because the same Hebrew word is translated different in Neh 9:38, the singers were given an ordinance over what the singers could do. I believe it was the former (allowance of money) instead of the latter (an ordinance).

King's agent. Literally, "toward the King's hand." I take this to mean that Pethanhiah of the tribe of Judah was the province of Judah's ambassador to the Persian capital of Susa. It is my guess that he was close to the hand of Artaxerxes and lived in Susa, representing the Jewish people under Nehemiah, the governor.

11:25-36 Leaders of the people who lived outside Jerusalem.

Kiriath-arba. Many times, the Scriptures explain that this is the most ancient name for Hebron. This was its name when Abraham lived. By Joshua's day, it was renamed Hebron (Gen 23:2, 35:27, Josh 14:15, 15:13, 15:54, 20:7, 21:11). (These are the only verses that mention the city by this name--that is, 2 times in Genesis, 5 times in Joshua, and 1 time here.)

Dibon. This was a town on the other side of the Dead Sea, outside of the actual province of Judah. But it was within the ancient borders of the tribe of Reuben when Joshua partitioned the Promised Land.

Villages. Nearly all the villages mentioned here are also mentioned somewhere in Joshua or the Samuels.

Benjamin's descendants. As is noted throughout Ezra and Nehemiah, only Judah, Benjamin, and Levi return from the exile, basically the remnants of the old Kingdom of Judah.

Levites were in Benjamin. Remember that the Levites did not have territory of their own. They were scattered throughout all of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This is why God had all the other tribes give them a tenth.

12:1-26 Leaders of the Jews from Zerubbabel to current day.

Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was not a high priest. He is probably mentioned because he was the leader of the people before the temple was built and Jeshua became the first high priest over the Second Temple. These were the spiritual leaders during that time which would have been 522-515 BC.

[Verses 2-9]. Within these verses, the Greek version omits two thirds of the names.

Jeshua. He was the first high priest of the Second Temple in 515 BC. Some source says that he was high priest until 490 BC.

Joiakim. It looks like Joiakim became high priest next. Some source says he was high priest from 490-470 BC. We have no record of any events from Joiakim's life. It looks like he was high priest mostly during the reign of Xerxes I.

Eliashib. (1) The first mention of Eliashib as high priest is Neh 3:1. Some source says he was high priest from 470-433 BC. This makes him high priest during the days of Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah (except for chapter 13). (2) But the date given from that source might not be correct. Nehemiah said he was governor for 12 years. This means he return to Susa in 433 BC. Yet Nehemiah said that it was after he left that Eliashib made a room in the temple for Tobiah (Neh 13:4-7). It doesn't seem to be implied but perhaps Eliashib made the room in the Temple for the high priest immediately after Nehemiah left, in the same year, Eliashib's last year as high priest.

[Verses 22-23]. Because we know Eliashib is the high priest for about 10 more years, verses 22, 23, and probably 11 also must have been added by an editor about 60 years later. This also explains why it mentions Darius the Persian who would be Darius III. Here is what is going on. Eliashib is the high priest at this time. Right around the time, probably very soon after Nehemiah returns to Susa at some time around this chapter, Eliashib's son, Joiada, becomes high priest. Later, Johanan becomes high priest. Then much later, when Jaddua becomes high priest in 371 BC (according to some source), the king at that time was Darius III of Persia. These two verses are looking to the future high priesthoods of Joiada (Neh 13), Johanan and Jaddua. Why would someone 70 years in the future include this in Nehemiah's book? Well, Darius III was the last king of Persia and was conquered by Alexander the Great. So it makes sense for an editor to come to this book and finish out the information about the Jewish high priest through the rest of the Persian Empire. And he was good enough to make a note about when he did that: during Darius III.

Johanan. He was high priest after Eliashib, his father. Throughout all of Nehemiah, Eliashib is high priest. As for chapter 13, the high priest could be either Eliashib or Johanan, probably not Eliashib.

[Verse 25]. Interestingly all six names given in verse 25 (Levites and gatekeepers) are omitted in the Greek. Hashabiah, Sherebiah, Jeshua. These three men are mentioned many times in Nehemiah. The first two are mentioned as early as Ezra 8, who came to Jerusalem with Ezra. Therefore, these men did not live in the time of David, but were the leaders during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. Nehemiah just wants us to know that the division of the Levites were the same as they were in David's day. Verse 26 explains when these men served. See that note below.

Mattaniah, Bakbukiah. These two Levites were previously listed in Neh 11:17.

These served in the days. We see from the book of Nehemiah that all the names listed in verses 24-25 served in the days of Nehemiah the governor and Eliashib the high priest. This verses add Joiakim who was high priest between Jeshua and Eliashib. While Joiakim was high priest, Ezra was the governor. So the mention of Ezra in this verse fits. When combining all these time periods, you have both the governorships of Ezra and Nehemiah and the high priesthoods of Joiakim and Eliashib. Therefore, the point of verse 26 is to explain that the people listed in verses 24-25 served within a window of about 60 years.

Nehemiah the governor. The Greek does include the title of governor here. But the Greek does say Nehemiah is the governor in Neh 10:1.

12:27-43 The festivities of the Levites and the leaders.

[Wall completed]. The wall was completed in Neh 6:15 and then discussed through 7:3. Neh 12:27-43 is about the dedication of the wall and the festivities they did in celebrating the wall. It's possible that this dedication happened after the completion of the wall and before Ezra read from the Law in chapter 8. Because Neh 11:27 says that the Levites had to be sent for, this is probably after chapter 11 when many people settled in Jerusalem and other settled in villages across the province. Also, Neh 12:44 sounds like they had already established the vow from chapter 10.

Villages of the Netophanthites, Beth-gilgal, Geba, Azmaveth. None of these places are mentioned in the Greek. It simply reads, "from the villages and from the country."

Netophanthites. Based on 1Chr 2:54, the villages of the Netophanthites were probably near Bethlehem.

Two large processions. When comparing the direction and gates of both processions, the starting point for all of them was the Valley Gate, at the southwest corner of Jerusalem. (Interestingly, this was also the gate that Nehemiah started at when he went out at night to inspect the wall's ruins.) The following descriptions of their two processions along the wall match up perfectly to the above map.

One went to the right. The first procession (which included Ezra) went east and passed through the city of David, including what Nehemiah calls the "house of David," which probably was David's old palace. Who knows, in Nehemiah's day when they rebuilt the walls, they made have made the house of David an historical landmark.

With musical instruments. The Hebrew says, "musical instruments." The Greek says either, "hymns of praise," or, "strongly praised."

On the east. This phrase does not appear in the Greek.

Second went to the left. The second procession (which included Nehemiah) went north and passed over the Broad Wall and passed by the governor's throne.

[Processions in the Greek]. In the Greek, there is a problem. In verse 31, it also says that there were two processions. But verses 38-42 are missing in the Greek, which are about the second procession and about how they met together at the temple. But parts of verse 39 are in the Greek, so when one reads the Greek version straight through, that portion from verse 39 sounds like the first procession. And that doesn't make sense. If there was only one procession, then the order of gates/towers in verse 39 is backwards. Therefore, the verses in the Hebrew should be there and the verses in the Greek should not have been omitted. Why the Greek doesn't have them, it is unknown.

Two processions stood in the house of God. The processions started about the farthest from the temple one could be. They went around the whole city and ended near the northeast corner which is nearest to the temple. One can tell that they did this on purpose so the temple would be the place to gather for their celebrations.

Because God had given them great joy. Remember when the wall was completed and the enemies of the Jews lost their confidence (Neh 6:15-16)? The people knew that the completion of the wall was by divine strength, both physical strength and emotional strength because the Jews had persevered over all the schemes in which their enemies tried to trap them. The Israelites already had incredible joy when they celebrated the Festival of Booths (Neh 8:17). All the joy they are feeling is from God and they are celebrating that!

Rejoicing was heard far away. The same thing was said about the joyful shouting and the loud weeping when the foundation of the temple had been laid (Ezra 3:13). But this time, there was no sadness. This was a divine joy. Their shouting could be heard far away; though I don't believe their shouts were literally heard by their enemies in the surrounding provinces, I do believe Nehemiah wants us to know that they celebrated so hard that their enemies heard about it.

12:44-47 Contributions to the Levites.

Contributions, firstfruits, tenths. This is a follow-up to the vow they made in chapter 10 (Neh 10:35-39). We see that the Jews are fulfilling the vow at this time.

Were gathered from the village fields. The Hebrew reads, "Collected from the fields of the cities." The Greek reads, "Collections in [or according to?] their chiefs of the cities." It appears that the main difference is that the Hebrew says that the provisions come from the fields while the Greek says that the provisions came from the chiefs. Perhaps both are correct: whatever provisions came from the fields, the chiefs made sure that the Levites received their correct provisions. When Nehemiah returns 12-20 years later, he blames the chiefs (Neh 13:11).

David and Asaph. The Greek reads, "Because in the days of David (Asaph the foremost chief), the singers..." Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. (1) Why mention Zerubbabel and Nehemiah? Why leave out Ezra? I believe this phrase should mean, "So from the days of Zerubbabel through the days of Nehemiah..." Of course, it was during the time of Zerubbabel that the temple construction started and completed. So from the beginning of the Second Temple in 515 BC through the time of Nehemiah in 443 BC (73 years), the priests and Levites received their daily portions. The Jews were faithful in giving the due portions to the Levites and priests. (2) Another reason the author mentions this is because all of this changed by the time Nehemiah returns 12-20 years later in chapter 13. Sadly, we see that the Jews had neglected the provisions for the Levites, the priests, and the temple.

Set aside daily portions. From the way this is described, it looks like the people gave a tenth to the Levites and they managed the portions. And then the Levites gave the proper portions to the priests (the descendants of Aaron). I get the impression that the Levites are managing the logistics which allows the priests to focus on their spiritual service.

13:1-9 Eliashib and the people (priests?) intermixed with foreigners.

At that time. This phrase appears at the beginning of verses 1, 15, and 23. Along with 13:6, discovering the timing of this chapter is difficult. I believe these phrases are to denote the various times when Nehemiah found these problems during his return to Jerusalem between 431-424 BC. In 13:6 when Nehemiah said that these things happened while he was away, I believe he is talking about Neh 13:4-5, which is about Eliashib, Tobiah, Levites, and priests. It is likely that when Nehemiah returned this time, he was not the governor like he had been before.

Command was found. (1) These events are 12-20 years after Nehemiah returned to Artaxerxes. Apparently, the people forgot all about their vow. (2) What command did the Israelites find? It was probably Deut 23:3-5. The full story about the Israelites, Moabites, and Balaam is found in Num 22-24.

They separated all those of mixed descent. This finding of the command probably sparked Nehemiah and the people to find Tobiah's room in the temple.

Eliashib the priest. Chronologically, according to one source, Eliashib the high priest ceased to be high priest within one year after Nehemiah left to return to Persia (see note on Eliashib at Neh 12:22).

Relative of Tobiah. The details about how Tobiah (probably the second-in-command in the province of Samaria) was related to the Jews, see Neh 6:18. As Nehemiah explains here, the Jews mentioned in 6:18 were probably priests or Levites and Eliashib was related to them.

Prepared a large room. I get the impression that this was a political move. As we saw throughout the whole book, Tobiah was always an enemy of the Jews and Nehemiah had been constantly defending against his attacks. Even though Tobiah was no friend of the Jews, some Jews spoke well of Tobiah--probably because of family connections (Neh 6:19). So after Nehemiah left, the Jews who spoke well of Tobiah very quickly prevailed and persuaded Eliashib to go back on their vow and give a room to a foreign leader. I imagine that they used a political angle, saying things like, "Do this for Tobiah and it will improve relations with Samaria. Do this and they will never attack us with their army."

Where they had previously stored. Previously? All the things that Nehemiah lists here are related to the vow that the Jews made in chapter 10 (Neh 10:35-39). Nehemiah is implying that the Jews were true to that vow in the beginning, but within one year's time, they abandoned the vow and used what space they had and gave it to a foreign leader!

While all this was happening. See notes at the beginning of this section on "Chronology."

Thirty-second year of Artaxerxes. This year was 433 BC.

Rooms be purified. As explained in Neh 13:1-3, it was against God's commands for there to be a foreigner in the temple. Nehemiah has them purify the unholy or unclean rooms so that they are holy again. The purification of the things in the temple and of the priests themselves is mentioned throughout the Old Testament. Along the same lines, Hezekiah had to do some major purifications when he was restoring temple worship (2Chr 29).

Articles of the house of God restored. Not only did Nehemiah have the priests use the room as a storeroom so they could fulfill their vow from chapter 10, but Nehemiah also restored the temple's articles. Apparently, Tobiah's infiltration of the temple was worse than just breaking an official vow. Tobiah was messing around with Moses' commands regarding proper service in the temple. What articles had to be restored? I imagine it was very important ones.

13:10-14 Levites not being supported by the people.

Portions for the Levites had not been given. We saw how Eliashib and the priests had neglected the house of God by allowing Tobiah to live there. In this section, we see that the people neglected the house of God by not supporting the Levites and priests. So both clergy and laity were to blame!

Gone back to his own field. Why would the Levites go back to their fields to be farmers? They ought to have had enough from all the provisions, the tenths, and the offerings from the non-Levites. Apparently, the people had stopped bringing the things about which they vowed in chapter 10. The Levites and priests should have been supported by the people. The only reason for them to leave the temple and return to the field is because the people had neglected them. The Levites probably said, "No one is bringing us enough supplies for us to do our God-given duty in the temple. Let's return to our farms so that we can feed our families."

House of God neglected. This is exactly what the vow in chapter 10 was all about! The last phrase explicitly says, "We will not neglect the house of our God" (Neh 10:39). Nehemiah's rebuked is well deserved because it has only been 12-20 years.

Remember me for this, my God. Excluding Ezra's prayer in chapter 9, this is Nehemiah's eighth prayer.

13:15-22 Working on the Sabbath.

Treading the wine presses. The first thing Nehemiah notices on the Sabbath was that the Jews were doing work. They were breaking the fourth commandment!

Loading them on donkeys. They were also making their animals do work.

Goods were being brought to Jerusalem. The final thing Nehemiah notices that they were conducting their businesses on the Sabbath and allowing foreigners to perpetuate it.

Tyrian. In the Greek, it does not say "Tyrian" but says that men of Jerusalem are doing this.

Rebuked the nobles. Now, according to Mosaic Law, anyone profaning the Sabbath was to be killed (Ex 31:14, Num 15:32-36). From how this chapter is worded, Nehemiah doesn't kill anyone. He either showed them

mercy because they repented or there was a Persian law forbidding capital punishment for this reason. I believe it was the former.

Brought all this disaster on us and on this city. Nehemiah probably remembers exactly what Jeremiah prophesied and exactly what God fulfilled. Jer 17:19-23, 27. Nehemiah knows that keeping the Sabbath was one of the many and important commands that God required them to do, and because they didn't, it caused them to go into exile and be captive under Babylon.

Rekindling His anger. Nehemiah knows how serious God is when he speaks. When he says that they will rekindle God's anger, he knows that God could destroy them all over again, starting an all-new captivity.

Shadows began to fall. (1) The Jewish day began at sundown. I can see how the gates were closed as soon as the sun hit the top of the horizon. But closing the gates before that as the shadows are falling? What about the Jews who lived in the villages and worked in Jerusalem (and vice versa)? They need to leave work early in order to make it in before the gates are closed. I know no one would complain about that, but it feels unnecessary to close the gates so early when sunset is already a great time to close the gates. Nehemiah's decision seems to be so conservative, so unnecessary, and so beyond what God expects of His people. (2) Now, this phrase about the shadows is not found in the Greek version, which does not imply that Nehemiah did this.

Not opened until after the Sabbath. Remember, 20-33 years before, Nehemiah had commanded that the gates would not be opened until the sun was hot (Neh 7:3). This was every day. So surrounding the Sabbath, the gates might have been closed a while before the Sabbath and then always opened a while after the Sabbath.

Posted some of my men. Was posting guards at the gates necessary? What were they for? Weren't the gates closed anyway? Was this to prevent people from sneaking in or sneaking out? Were they merely to enforce Nehemiah's commands? Were they stand-ins until Nehemiah placed Levites at the gates in verse 22?

Merchants camped outside. Think about what is going on here. The merchants are showing up at Jerusalem as they normally did. But when they found the gates closed, they stuck around, waiting for the gates to open. Why didn't they leave and visit the surrounding villages? Apparently, with the wealth Jerusalem had to offer through their business, it was worth it to stick around. The merchants were fully expecting the Jews to open the doors later in the day.

I'll use force against you. Literally, "I'll lay the hand on you." Nehemiah is threatening them with soldiers. To me, this image is funny. I can see Jerusalem's doors closed with merchants outside waiting to get in. The Jews are familiar with what ought to be done on the Sabbath, but the merchants (like from Tyre) are not. So here you have Nehemiah, an old man on the wall yelling at them, "Why are you loitering outside the city? Don't you have something else to do? You're trespassing, so leave. If you come back, then I'll get the cops." I find it funny that the merchants aren't getting the idea so Nehemiah has to yell at them in order to get them to leave.

Levites. In the end, (1) Nehemiah puts the Levites in charge of the gates. This really makes a lot of sense.

This wasn't a duty the priests ought to do, but since it has to do with the Jews' purity in keeping the Sabbath, the Levites are the best choice to do this. (2) Could this be the beginning of the "temple police" in the gospels and Acts?

Remember me for this also, my God. This is Nehemiah's ninth prayer.

13:23-29 Marrying pagan wives.

Ashdod, Ammon, Moab. (1) Ashdod was one of the main five cities of the Philistines which was outside the Promised Land. Now, the Philistines' history was ended when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the whole area. In Nehemiah's day, Ashdod was not to be viewed as Philistines, though the Philistine culture may still existed in some fashion. Ashdod was to the west of Jerusalem. Ammon was the capital of the Ammonites. Like Ashdod, this was outside the Promised Land but Ammon was to the east, on the other side of the Jordan. Moab was the capital of the Moabites. Like Ashdod and Ammon, Moab was outside the Promised Land but Moab was to the southeast, on the other side of the Dead Sea. (2) The point of listing these locations are to show that the Jews are intermarrying with extreme pagans (as opposed to the Samaritans). There was no way that these people would be ally to the God of the Jews.

Half of the children. Nehemiah isn't saying that half of all the children have a foreign parent. We don't know how many children have a foreign parent, but of those who do, half of them did not speak Judahite. About marrying foreign wives, see notes at Ezra 9-10. Marrying a foreign wife was not in itself a sin but a warning. Why? God warned that they would turn their children away from God to worship other gods (Deut 7:4). Now, if half of these intermarried families aren't even teaching their children the current language of the Jews, then they certainly are not teaching them about the God of the Jews! What is going on here is far worse than what went on in Ezra 9-10. There, they pushed away foreign wives who had detestable

practices. Here, they are marrying foreign women who are so influential on their family that the children are not even learning the language of the Jewish parent! This kind of anti-Jewish upbringing is setting up the worst kind of blasphemy. I mean, usually, departure from God takes many years, over many generations. Here, children are being raised as pagan in one generation! The time between Nehemiah's return to Artaxerxes and his return here is 12-20 years. Within that very quick time, many Jews were already on the verge of losing their children to foreign gods!

Judahite. Most translations say, "Jews' language." This is an accurate translation. They did not speak Hebrew, but apparently speak a dialect of Aramaic which Nehemiah calls "Judahite" here.

Rebuked, cursed, beat, pulled out hair. (1) Nehemiah's response was serious and brutal. Based on how quickly and how significantly the Jews were falling away from God. Nehemiah's response was not uncalled for. (2) When this report reached Ezra's ear, he tore hair from his own head (Ezra 9:3). When Nehemiah hears about this more detestable report, he tore hair from their heads. He left them in good standing just 12-20 years before. Oh how far they had already fallen!

Foreign women draw him into sin. (1) Not only was Moses and God very clear in Deut 7:1-6, but Solomon is the biggest example of not listening to God's warning (1King 11:1-13). Nehemiah knows Solomon's story well, as should everyone else. When it comes to the seriousness of this sin, Solomon's bad example should be plenty reason for the people to repent of this sin. (2) The teaching that a person of God should not marry someone who is not a person of God is echoed in the New Testament (1Cor 7:39 and possibly 2Cor 6:14). God would give the same warning to a Christian today—that they should not marry a non-Christian. (3) Chronologically, it is highly probable that Malachi prophesied between Nehemiah 12 and 13 while Nehemiah was back in Susa. It is possible that Malachi is condemning the Jews for marrying foreign wives around this time (Mal 2:10-12). Whether or not Malachi is speaking literally to their marriage to foreign wives, his message about being enticed by foreign gods is certainly happening here.

Jehoiada, son of Eliashib the high priest. (1) This person's sin was greater than other's sin because he was one of the leaders of the people, being the son of the high priest. Also, by marrying a foreign woman, he had broke the explicit command given to the priests that they must marry a virgin from their own people (Lev 21:13-15). (2) Chronologically, it is highly probable that Malachi prophesied between Nehemiah 12 and 13 while Nehemiah was back in Susa. It is possible that Malachi is condemning the priests for their neglect for being God's teachers (Mal 2:4-9). Whether or not Malachi is speaking literally to Jehoiada's pagan marriage, his message about being a blameless priest and teacher for the people was neglected by Jehoiada. (3) This person is mentioned nowhere else in Scripture. Neh 12:10-11 lists the lineage of the high priest. Jehoiada is not mentioned. Either, Jehoiada is the same as Joiada, Eliashib's son who became high priest, or Jehoiada is another son of Eliashib who was never high priest. Because one source says that Joiada was high priest until 410, 14-21 years after when Nehemiah would have returned to Persia, I do not believe Joiada is the one talked about here. Jehoiada appears to be another son of Eliashib, revealing that he had at least two sons. Also, I would think that Nehemiah would have used much stronger language than "drove him away" if Jehoiada was high priest. Nehemiah's punishment on Jehoiada was severe, but it wasn't as severe as if he was high priest, I believe.

Drove him away. What is meant by this is unclear. It is probably better translated, "Caused him to flee from me." A similar wording is given in Ezra 10:3 which literally says, "Caused them to go out." If that is the case, perhaps Nehemiah, like Ezra had done, gave Jehoiada a choice to leave his pagan wife, but because he wouldn't, this caused Jehoiada to flee from Nehemiah's presence, the priesthood, and all the people of the Jews. This is probably how Nehemiah "purged the evil from them" (Deut 17:7) without killing him.

Remember them, my God. This is Nehemiah's tenth prayer. This prayer along with his prayer about Tobiah and Sanballat in Neh 6:14 are prayers that Nehemiah prayed for his enemies. They do not appear to be prayers of forgiveness. Both times, Nehemiah prayers that God remembers them for their wickedness.

13:30-31 More instructions for the Levite contribution.

Everything foreign. Who did Nehemiah purify? I believe the priests and Levites. Unlike the other tribes, God gave specific instructions that they ought to be exceptionally pure. As seen in Lev 21:13-15, it wasn't enough for the priests and Levites to be pure from the pagan influences around them but also from the foreign influences around them.

Specific duties. I believe the duties that Nehemiah assigned to them were the duties explained in Neh 13:11b-13. The Levites had gone home to their farms. Nehemiah was re-assigning their duties that they should have continued because of the vow in chapter 10. In other words, Nehemiah was restoring the vow they made 12-20 years before.

Donation of wood. Of all the items listed in the vow from chapter 10, when Nehemiah returned at this time, which items did Nehemiah not correct? Comparing Neh 10 and 13, let's review all the parts of the vow and what Nehemiah had to correct. (1) Neh 10:30 was on intermarriage. Nehemiah had to correct this in Neh

13:23-28. (2) Neh 10:31 was on doing business on the Sabbath, keeping it holy, and observing the Sabbath years. Nehemiah had to correct the first two in Neh 13:15-22a. Perhaps the only reason Nehemiah didn't correct the Sabbath years law was because this was not a Sabbath year. If Nehemiah had returned during that year, I'm sure he would have found the Jews farming the land that year. (3) Neh 10:32-33 was on supplying the temple with money, the sacrifices, and festivals—"for all the work of the house of our God." Nehemiah had to correct these because Neh 13:5 explains that these things were replaced with living quarters for Tobiah. He restored these things in Neh 13:9. (4) Neh 10:34 was on supplying constant wood for the altar of God. Nehemiah mentions this last (Neh 13:31) as if to say, "I had to correct nearly everything that they had vowed before I went back to Susa. And yes, even the bringing of the wood had to be corrected too." (5) Neh 10:35-38a was about the firstfruits and the firstborns for the Levites, including the tithes, offerings, wine, and oil. Nehemiah corrected these things in Neh 13:10-13. (6) Therefore, was there anything that they had vowed in chapter 10 that was still fulfilled when Nehemiah returned in chapter 13? It doesn't appear to be anything! No wonder Nehemiah returns and acts the way he does. Nehemiah's legacy is more than just the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. He was also committed to rebuilding the people's purity.

Remember me, my God, with favor. This is Nehemiah's eleventh prayer. The book is concluded with a prayer because, as we have seen even from chapter 1, Nehemiah was a man of prayer. Eleven prayers is a lot considering that Nehemiah has 13 chapters and 4 of them (chapters 3, 7, half of 10, 11, and half of 12) were historical records, genealogies, or tedious lists of names... as well as most of chapter 9 being a prayer from Ezra or the priests. Nehemiah was a man who prayed often. Long before Paul spoke the words in 1Thes 5:17, "Pray without omission," Nehemiah certainly left nothing unprayed for. Let us do the same.