

NEHEMIAH

RETURNING FOR RENEWAL

Discussion Questions

Week of 4/7/24

Text: Various

Icebreaker: What's the most challenging project you've been a part of (school, work, etc.)? What made it difficult and how did it turn out?

1. The first few verses of Nehemiah might make us think, "Huh?" As background, read Jeremiah 25:8-14 and 32:36-41 and consult the map and caption below from the ESV Study Bible. What do these passages reveal about God's purposes for his people?

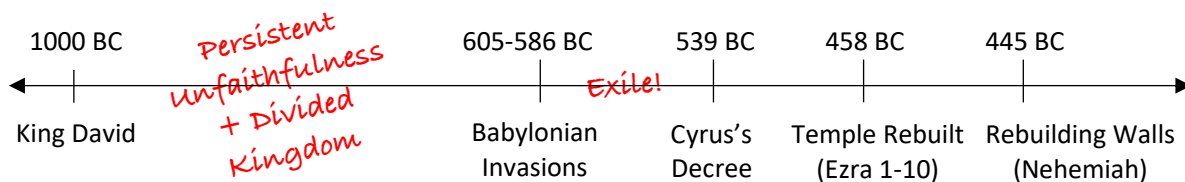


The Persian Empire at the Time of Nehemiah

c. 450 B.C.

During the time of Nehemiah, the Persian Empire had reached its greatest extent, engulfing nearly the entire Near East. In 539 B.C. the Persians under Cyrus the Great defeated the Babylonians and absorbed the lands of Israel and Judah (known as Beyond the River) into his empire. The next year he allowed the people of Judah (now called Jews) to return home and rebuild the temple of the Lord. Several waves of returning Jews continued to resettle in Judea, and Nehemiah was granted permission to rebuild Jerusalem's ruined walls around 445 B.C.

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Application: Jeremiah's words help us remember that God is ultimately in charge of history's events. What difference do you think that makes for us today?

Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.

2. Read Nehemiah 1:1-3. In a word or two, how would you describe the kind of situation Nehemiah and the rest of God's people are facing?

Application: What can happen to our faith when we face difficult circumstances? What do you think can we do to help strengthen our faith for difficult times?

3. Verse 2 mentions those who had survived the "exile"—the roughly 70-year period during which God's people were forced to live away from their home as subjects of other empires. What kind of challenges come with living in exile?

Application: Is there a sense in which we as Jesus followers can experience a sense of "exile" even if we have never lived outside our homeland?

4. *Application:* What are you hoping to get out of this series?

Take time as a group to pray that the Lord would use the book of Nehemiah to help encourage our faith and deepen our faithfulness to Jesus.